CLINTON'S SECOND TERM • JOHN WAYNE'S PHONINESS

THE NEW REPUBLIC

APRIL 22, 1996 • $2.95

Poisoned Apple • Blue Morocco • Postmodern Dirt

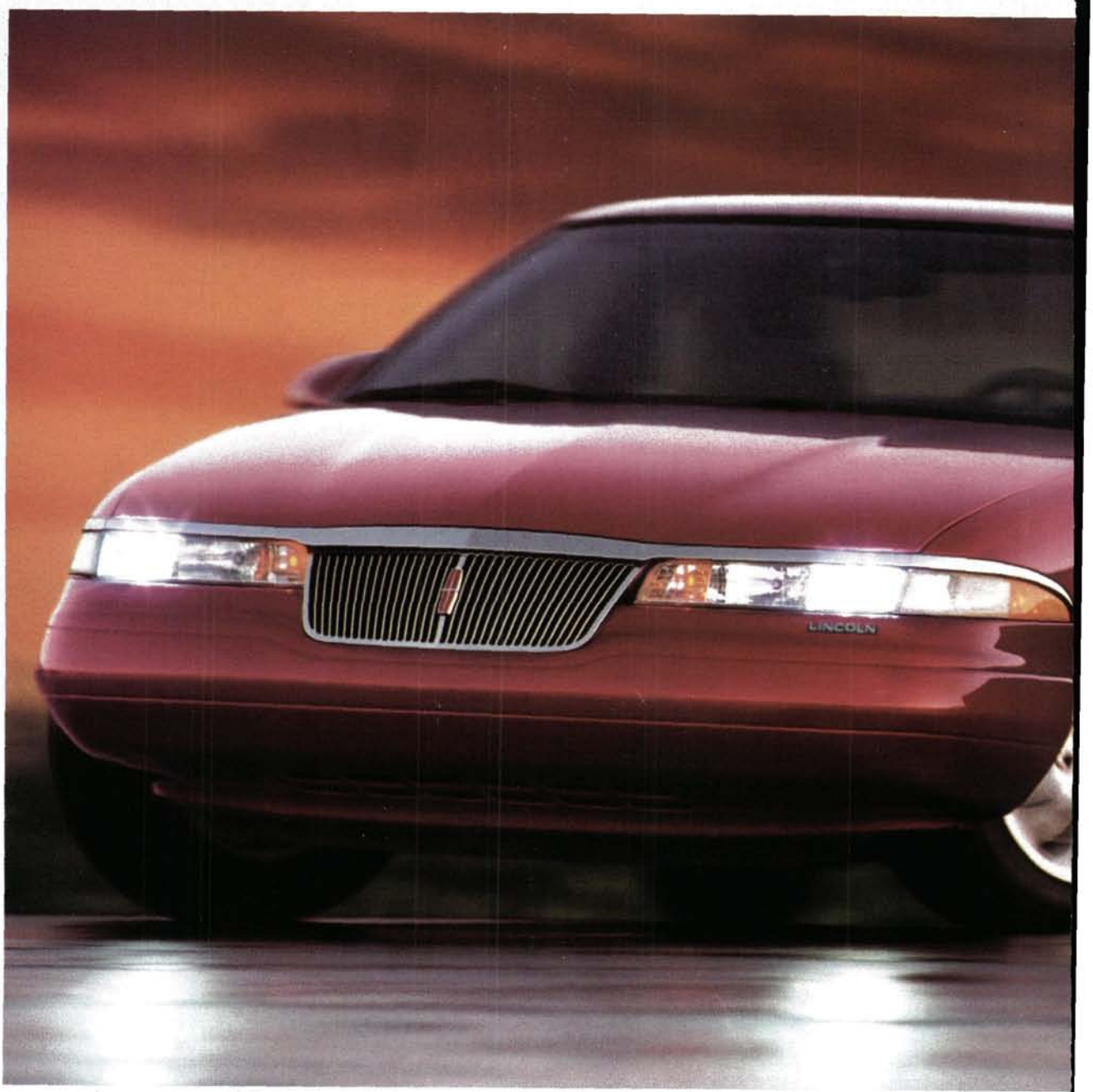
THE DAY THE QUOTAS DIED

Jeffrey Rosen on the ground-shaking University of Texas case, the dismantling of federal set-asides and the death-throes of affirmative action.

#BXBKDML ******* 3-DIGIT 757
#75755AB A1 1 1RY007# 012797
HO NWRE S00322
AMBASSADOR COLLEGE
ROY HAMMER LIB
PO BOX 111
BIG SANDY TX 75755

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now Available In Ex



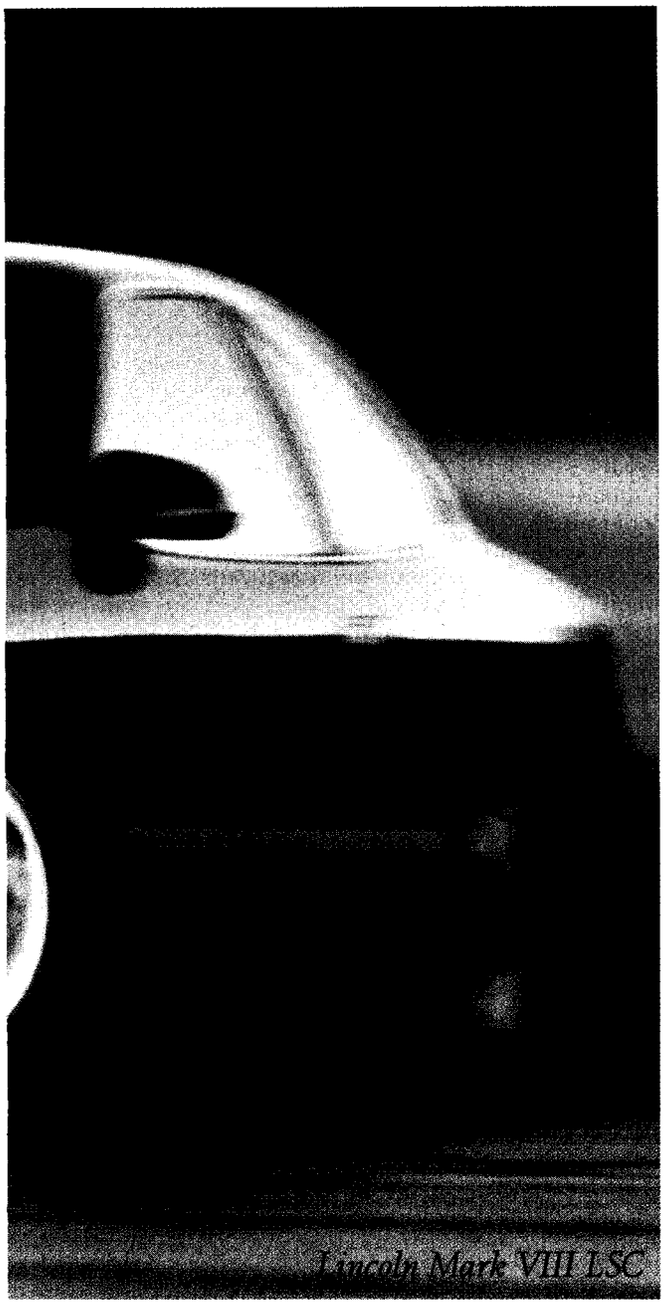
LINCOLN-MERCURY DIVISION

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AMBASSADOR UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

:a-Strength Formula.

P[illegible]x 11
Big Sandy, TX 57[illegible]



Introducing The 290-Horsepower Lincoln Mark VIII LSC.

Because some people just can't seem to get enough of a good thing, we found a way to give them even more. By creating the most responsive, most indulgent Lincoln Mark VIII ever in an exciting new luxury sport coupe edition. A coupe that anyone who puts a premium on style and performance would welcome.

It has an even more energetic 290-horsepower V-8 engine for quicker acceleration. Monochromatic accents for added flair. A taut sport suspension for better handling. Euro perforated leather seats. And new longer-lasting high-intensity Luminarc™ headlamps—a first among domestic automakers. These bright lights give off a distinct blue-white light at low beam for greater safety due to increased visibility.

Moreover, all this intelligent technology works together beautifully under the InTech™ System. A computer-managed network that constantly checks and re-checks powertrain, suspension and chassis functions. And, like all Lincolns, the engine in this new luxury sport coupe is designed to go 100,000 miles between scheduled tune-ups. Which, in itself, is quite a coup.

To learn more about this remarkable automobile, call 1 800 446-8888, or for information via the Internet, enter http://www.Lincolnvehicles.com.

LINCOLN
What A Luxury Car Should Be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TRB®

FROM WASHINGTON

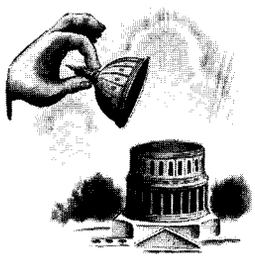
No exit

The American deployment in Bosnia is not yet three months old, but already foreign-policy wonks are learning its "lessons." In a March 6 speech at George Washington University, President Clinton's wonk-in-chief, national security adviser Anthony Lake, said that the Bosnia mission had been a success so far in part because it rests on the "principle" that "before we send our troops into a foreign country, we should know how and when we're going to get them out." A war for vital interests or national survival would obviously be open-ended, Lake conceded. But, in cases where the U.S. military is called upon to "keep peace in the wake of internal conflicts" abroad, Lake wants to set clear, achievable "military—I repeat, *military*" goals and to establish firm deadlines for the withdrawal of U.S. forces "based on the accomplishment of those missions."

Deadline Tony is a man of "tough love." It is not the responsibility of the United States or anyone else to solve the problems of a failed state like Bosnia; it is up to the people themselves to straighten up. The function of a U.S.-led peacekeeping mission is only to provide the "breathing room" in which this can happen. Staying too long inevitably becomes "overstaying one's welcome"; the government we are trying to help gets branded a "puppet regime" (like Saigon, where Lake spent a famously disillusioning portion of his youth); and U.S. troops become targets for every unhappy terrorist faction in town.

In part, of course, Lake's speech was just an effort to intellectualize a one-year Bosnia deadline imposed to keep Bill Clinton's 1996 from turning into Lyndon Johnson's 1968. He probably didn't literally mean that it's possible to "know" in advance how and when to get our troops out. And Lake's deadlines are the price he must pay for the cooperation of the military—which fretted mightily about "exit strategies" even during the decidedly unpeacekeeperly Gulf war deployment. (It is yet another sign of the armed forces' growing foreign-policy clout that Lake has apparently bought the Army folklore that holds that civilians, with their murky political objectives, were to blame for the debacle of Vietnam. "Our society blamed our soldiers for a defeat that was not theirs," Lake declared at G.W. "We must never put them in that position again. Never. It just mustn't happen.")

But let's set aside both crass political considerations and the question of what relevance the *war* in Vietnam really has to *peacekeeping* operations today. Lake's arguments are worth considering on the merits. They amount to the most authoritative distillation yet of White House thinking about "exit strategy," the elusive desideratum of so much post-Vietnam, post-Lebanon, post-Somalia, post-Haiti rumination on the use of force. At its core, the search for an exit strategy is a search for a way to square imperial means—the deployment of a U.S. expeditionary force—with liberal ends—the recovery of a shattered, suffering state, where no "vital," i.e., material, U.S. interest is necessarily at stake.



Lake is probably right that, in certain cases, a relatively rigid deadline for withdrawal helps reduce the risks to U.S. troops without jeopardizing the mission's overall political objectives. Disgruntled locals may figure the U.S. will be gone in a year anyway, so why bother provoking them to leave? This is roughly what happened in Haiti, where all those dire Republican warnings of snipers and quagmires were never borne out.

But Haiti is a special case. Even without 25,000 soldiers on the ground, the U.S. remains a nearby regional hegemon, so it can hardly be said to have "withdrawn" from Haitian affairs. The real tests of American internationalism have always come farther afield, in Europe, the Middle East and Asia. There, a deadline can send the message that the U.S. lacks confidence in the American public's will to support an otherwise-valid involvement if and when there are casualties. In many cases, would-be spoilers will take this as their cue to kill as many Americans as possible, as Mohammed Farah Aidid did in Somalia.

Lake's answer to this objection is that U.S. goals in Somalia became too sweeping—"it is dangerous hubris to believe that we can build other nations." But his disclaimer of "responsibilities that are not ours" is a bit surreal. Our intervention confers upon us a degree of responsibility for the political reconstruction of a failed state, whether we like it or not. Somalia has given nation-building a bum rap. The United States helped build pretty good nations in Japan, West Germany, South Korea—and, arguably, Panama and Grenada, too.

The U.S. must be selective about where and when it engages in such efforts; it must make sure that its political objectives are achievable and worth some risk. But, once those determinations have been made, our policy should be ambiguous about how long we're prepared to stay—and utterly clear about our willingness to overpower anyone who tries to drive us out before our political goals are achieved. Sarajevo's suburbs might be a laboratory of multiethnic reconstruction today if IFOR troops had waged a short, sharp campaign against the Serbian thugs who torched the places.

The U.S. does not necessarily have to nation-build in Bosnia as thoroughly as we did in West Germany. But reconstruction aid and a "secure environment" are not enough. Unless the U.S. also forces substantial change in the underlying political conditions that created internal conflict and thus necessitated our intervention in the first place, those conditions will re-emerge as soon as we leave. We may soon witness such a regression in Bosnia. The U.S. military has won control of the policy from its civilian masters, with the result that the mission has been limited to the task of separating local forces. Meanwhile, war criminals saunter unmolested through U.S. checkpoints, and the Muslim-Croat federation founders. The outlook for free elections darkens. The Bosnian Army begs for the weaponry it was promised.

The United States now faces a predictable dilemma: it must either let its one-year withdrawal deadline slip or accept political defeat. The fixation on "exit strategies," it turns out, has not provided a way around the essential issue: that, in the modern world, peacekeepers must often do what empires used to. Unless you're prepared to accept that fact, and its implications, maybe you shouldn't deploy U.S. forces in the first place. An exit strategy won't do much good without a strategy.

CHARLES LANE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE NEW REPUBLIC

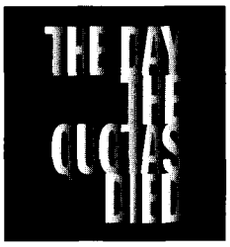
A Weekly Journal of Opinion

APRIL 22, 1996

FOUNDED 1914
WASHINGTON, D.C.
ISSUE 4,240

AMBASSADOR UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

PO Box 111
Big Sandy, TX 75755



Cover by Eric Baker for THE NEW REPUBLIC. Article on page 21.

4 **CHARLES LANE** TRB: NO EXIT Time to extend the Dayton deadline.

6 **CORRESPONDENCE** Citadel dissenters, a Cuba slugfest, &c.

9 **THE EDITORS** MR. SECRETARY Ron Brown's consummate Washington life.

10 **NOTEBOOK** Anti-anti-Catholicism, hoop schemes, &c.

12 **BARRY RUBIN** HOLY TERROR Why is the Clinton administration coddling Syria?

13 **RICHARD STENGEL** PLETTENBERG BAY POSTCARD: WHITES South Africa at play.

14 **MATTHEW COOPER** WHITE HOUSE WATCH: FOUR MORE YEARS Crafting a second term.

15 **DAVID HOSANSKY** ON THE HILL: WEEDED OUT The farm bill survivor: tobacco.

16 **JAMES WOOD** CAMBRIDGE POSTCARD: DOWN AND DIRTY Post-everything at Harvard.

19 **RANDALL STROSS** POISONED APPLE How the dream of the countercultural computer turned into the nightmare of a $700 million loss.

21 **JEFFREY ROSEN** THE DAY THE QUOTAS DIED The federal government is busy doing away with set-asides; the University of Texas has just been instructed to abandon "diversity." Did *Adarand* v. *Peña* kill affirmative action?

28 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ON FILMS: THE LIGHT TOUCH *Flirting with Disaster* is a great seduction; *The First Picture Show* confirms the Lumières' original genius.

29 **ROBERT BRUSTEIN** ON THEATER: THE NEW BOHEMIANS *Rent* needs control; *The Green Bird* is a triumph.

31 **CLIFFORD GEERTZ** JAVA JIVE *Footsteps* and *House of Glass* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer

34 **JIM SLEEPER** BROTHER ACT *Go and Tell Pharaoh* by Al Sharpton and Anthony Walton

36 **PAUL KANE** POEM *Wissenschaftslehre*

38 **JACKSON LEARS** SCREW AMBIGUITY *John Wayne: American* by Randy Roberts and James S. Olson

42 **MARTIN PERETZ** MOROCCO DIARIST: HIDE AND SOUK

Editor-in-Chief and Chairman
MARTIN PERETZ

Editor
ANDREW SULLIVAN
Literary Editor
LEON WIESELTIER
Executive Editor
MARGARET TALBOT
Senior Editors
MATTHEW COOPER, ANN HULBERT, JOHN B. JUDIS, CHARLES LANE, MICHAEL LEWIS, MICHAEL LIND, JAMES WOOD, ROBERT WRIGHT
Managing Editor
PETER BEINART
Legal Affairs
JEFFREY ROSEN
Economics
MATTHEW MILLER
Films
STANLEY KAUFFMANN
Theater
ROBERT BRUSTEIN
Poetry
MARK STRAND
Dance
MINDY ALOFF
Photography
LUC SANTE
Art
JED PERL
New Republic Books (Basic Books)
PAUL GOLOB
Contributing Editors
FOUAD AJAMI, ELIOT A. COHEN, STANLEY CROUCH, JACOB HEILBRUNN, ANNA HUSARSKA, MICKEY KAUS, MICHAEL KINSLEY, CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER, VINT LAWRENCE, GLENN LOURY, DOUGLAS G. McGRATH, LOUIS MENAND, ROGER ROSENBLATT, MAGGIE SCARF, ROBERT SHAPIRO, RONALD STEEL, E.V. THAW, TOM TOLES, TATYANA TOLSTAYA, MICHAEL WALZER, JACOB WEISBERG, SEAN WILENTZ, ALAN WOLFE, C. VANN WOODWARD
Associate Editors
NADER MOUSAVIZADEH, HANNA ROSIN, RUTH SHALIT
Design Consultant
ERIC BAKER
Editorial-Corporate Coordinator
LAURA E. OBOLENSKY
Production Director
BRUCE STEINKE
Production Manager
HENRY RIGGS
Assistant Editors
DEBRA DUROCHER, JENNIFER BRADLEY
Literary Assistant
MELANIE REHAK
Reporter-Researchers
JONATHAN CHAIT, MICHAEL CROWLEY, STEPHEN GLASS, ELISSA SILVERMAN

President and Publisher
JOAN M. STAPLETON
Vice President
JAMES J. McCABE
Associate Publisher-Advertising
JENNIFER BARRETT
Controller
CHRISTINA R. BONIFER
Circulation Director
CECELIA M. STEPHENS
Marketing Manager
SHABNAM K. SHARMA
Advertising Manager
ASHLEY H. COOPER
Accounting Assistants
JACQUELYN M. McCULLOUGH, JEANNINE DINGMAN
Advertising Assistant
CLAIRE P. STERN
Circulation Assistant
CAROLYN BERRY
Back Issues and Reception
MARGO JOHNSON

THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 214, Number 17, Issue 4,240, April 22, 1996. (Printed in the U.S. on April 3, 1996.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 8 & 15, July 15 & 22, Aug. 19 & 26, and Sept. 16 & 23, 1996) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. The New Republic Advertising Sales Office (212) 702-4882. Yearly subscriptions, $69.97; foreign, $99.97; Canada, $84.97. Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage & handling). © 1995 by The New Republic, Inc. (ISSN 0028-6583). Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Microform, CD-ROM, issue and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Internet mail address: tnr@aol.com Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscribers: Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 602, Mount Morris, IL 61054. For subscription problems call 800-827-1289.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CORRESPONDENCE

Storming

To the editors:

Regarding Michael Lewis's article on Pat Buchanan and the Citadel ("Reality Bites," March 25), there are several factual errors and one misquote. The Citadel closed its front gates during Buchanan's speech in compliance with a request from proper law enforcement officials. Obviously this was not to protect him from bullets but to divert traffic. All of the other intersections off campus leading to the speaking area were also cordoned off.

The article also states that Pat Buchanan is the "lone" supporter of public-supported single-gender education. In fact every Republican candidate publicly expressed support of the Citadel the night before in the South Carolina debate.

I was quoted as saying that I traveled to Washington to solicit the support of Republicans in our court case. This is wholly inaccurate. I traveled to Washington as a private citizen to brief a group of bipartisan congressmen and senators. Many independently expressed their support. I am sure the misquote was unintentional, but it paints an untruth, and, as you know, "a cadet does not lie, cheat, steal, nor tolerate those who do."

MICHAEL P. MURPHY
Charleston, South Carolina

Judis the disciple

To the editors:

I am writing in response to John B. Judis's March 25 article, "The Reactionary." Judis proposes that the American public review Steve Forbes's ideas in light of history, a history that I must assume was guided by the principles of our Constitution. Nowhere in the document exists an "American commitment to social equality." Instead, the paper guarantees universal equality under the law. Equality of outcome and equality of opportunity are fundamentally different. While the former implies a redistribution of wealth, i.e., the taking of property of some to give to others, the latter protects the right to personal property. If it were anyone other than the federal government doing the taking, it would be considered stealing.

The Constitution is an amorphous document for Judis, one that changes colors and shapes to suit his social concerns. Forbes is a "reactionary" simply because he does not assume the fallacious communal commitment to economic parity that Judis upholds. Is it "regressive" to expect, indeed not to demand, equal taxation for equal representation? Is it "reactionary" to devolve power from the EPA and other agencies back to elected officials, as Forbes suggests? Absolutely not. Judis is the reactionary, reacting to changes in the social barometer instead of upholding the vision (and written law) of our Founding Fathers.

MARTHA HUMMEL
Arlington, Virginia

Star struck

To the editors:

I realize it's suspect these days to admit knowing much about the Confederacy, but a commitment to historical accuracy still compels me to point out an error in Matthew Cooper's article "Deliverance" (March 25). Cooper correctly writes that part of the Georgia state flag is taken from the Confederate battle flag—that now-familiar design of white stars in a blue X on a red field.

He falls into error, however, when he refers to that flag as the stars and bars. The term "stars and bars" refers not to the battle flag but to the original Confederate flag, one that had a blue canton in the upper left containing a circle of seven white stars, and on the remainder three wide stripes, or bars, of red, white and red.

The stars-and-bars flag caused the Confederates no end of trouble because it was often hard to distinguish from the United States flag, the stars and stripes. The battle flag solved that problem, and the stars-and-bars flag was discontinued midway through the Civil War.

CALLOWAY COCHRAN
Dallas, Texas

Unconcilio Cubano

To the editors:

In "Fidel and Mr. Smith" (March 25), Charles Lane's description of Wayne Smith as an "apologist" for Fidel Castro was a vicious ad hominem attack on a person who has always considered the Castro government heavy-handed and has advocated that Cuba move toward a more open political system.

Smith's argument that the U.S. could encourage that movement by relaxing tensions and beginning to engage Cuba is exactly the position taken by all of

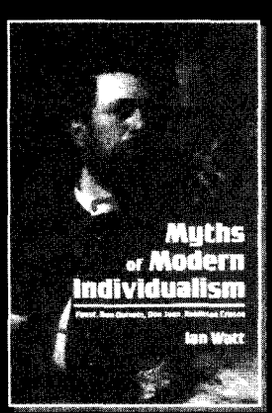
*"This is a book everyone should read."**

Myths of Modern Individualism
Faust, Don Quixote, Don Juan, Robinson Crusoe
Ian Watt

"Ian Watt occupies a special place among contemporary critics and historians of literature...he brings a firm and limpid style, often tinged with irony, never contaminated by jargon."
–The New Republic

"Ian Watt's magisterial* Myths of Modern Individualism *is a critical account – historical, cultural, moral and aesthetic – of how four great Western myths have insinuated themselves into the actualities of modern culture. Like all of Watt's work this is a remarkable work of the historical imagination, sympathetic without being fussy, erudite but always deft, analytic but very warm and witty."
–*Edward Said

"In its way this is as original a work as Watt's famous first book,* The Rise of the Novel. *It is a work of great maturity, testimony to the intelligence and civility of its author."
–Frank Kermode



48011-6 Hardback $27.95

Available in bookstores or from

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

40 West 20th Street, N.Y., NY 10011-4211
Call toll-free 800-872-7423.
Web site: http://www.cup.org
MasterCard/VISA accepted. Prices subject to change.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Cuba's Catholic bishops. Does Lane consider the Catholic bishops to be apologists for Castro? The Cuban Ecumenical Council, Cuban dissidents on the island such as Elizardo Sánchez and others also advocate a peaceful solution to the Cuban situation. Moreover, opposition leader Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo, who heads a moderate Cuban-American organization named Cambio Cubano, advocates the lifting of the U.S. embargo against Cuba and a policy of engagement as the best way to foster peace and democracy on the island. I hardly think Lane would call Gutierrez Menoyo, who spent twenty-two years in jail for his opposition to Castro, an "apologist."

We are of course quite used to hearing such slanderous allegations from extreme right-wing exiles who call anyone who advocates dialogue an "apologist." However, it is disappointing to see Charles Lane in THE NEW REPUBLIC resort to the same tactics.

JOSÉ PERTIERRA
Washington, D.C.

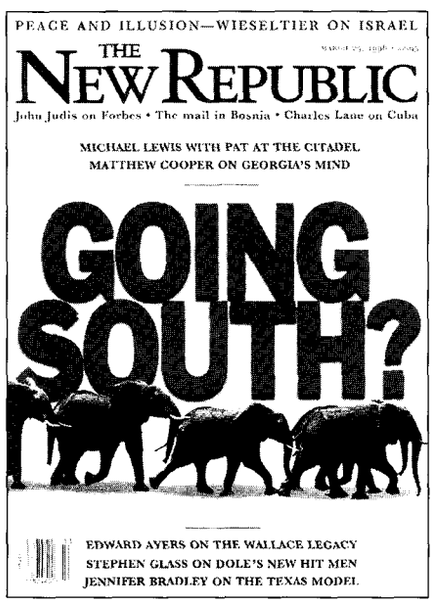
To the editors:

Charles Lane's peevish comments on my article in *Foreign Affairs* are such as to suggest he didn't read it. Its thrust was that Castro, like Franco in Spain, is indeed an authoritarian ruler with a low tolerance for dissent. (Perhaps it was the comparison with Franco that threw Lane off. His reading of history seems to be that the Franco regime was *not* a dictatorship. Hmm.) But, again like Franco, I go on to say, Castro bet on the wrong side of history and now must adjust to a world that has changed around him. It is not that he wants to carry out reforms, any more than Franco did. But he has no choice. If Cuba is to survive in a world in which there are no more sister socialist republics with which to trade and depend upon for investments and credits, it must adjust its own economy to the market systems around it.

Castro's recent crackdown on dissidents in Concilio Cubano in no way refutes this thesis. In my view, the crackdown was foolish and counterproductive, as I noted in *The New York Times*.

But my views are not Castro's. His decision was deplorable but hardly a surprise in these early stages of Cuba's long reform. The shootdown affects the thesis even less. If it points up anything, it is the tragic need for a more normal relationship between the two countries. Castro might have preferred that, but the signals from the Clinton administration were hardly promising. Crucially, as the administration, ever fearful of offending the right-wing exiles, took no measures at all to prevent their repeated violations of Cuban air space, Castro decided to prevent them himself, by the most drastic means. An overreaction? Of course. Deplorable? Certainly. But vintage Castro, whose central role in Cuban history has been as the defender of Cuban sovereignty against the United States. When the United States threatens, he will always fall back into that role. That a shootdown might assure passage of Helms-Burton would have weighed little if at all in Castro's decision. His reaction was probably, "if the Americans want to shoot themselves in the foot, let them."

I certainly stand by my statement that only Castro can bring about a transitional process without bloodshed. As should have been clear, the contending "factions" I spoke of were not the tiny groups of human rights activists but,


PEACE AND ILLUSION—WIESELTIER ON ISRAEL
THE
NEW REPUBLIC
John Judis on Forbes • The mail in Bosnia • Charles Lane on Cuba
MICHAEL LEWIS WITH PAT AT THE CITADEL
MATTHEW COOPER ON GEORGIA'S MIND
GOING SOUTH?
EDWARD AYERS ON THE WALLACE LEGACY
STEPHEN GLASS ON DOLE'S NEW HIT MEN
JENNIFER BRADLEY ON THE TEXAS MODEL

rather, factions within the Cuban government itself. Further, a policy that has getting rid of Castro as its objective is immediately stymied by the fact that he would have to be shot out of power, something the United States is not going to do. Thus, as we aren't going to get rid of him, we would have done better to concentrate on how best to encourage change even with him still in power. But it is now too late for that. Engagement has been ruled out. As I concluded in the *Foreign Affairs* article, perhaps, after all, it is just as well. American political leaders seem so incapable of dealing rationally with Cuba—and Castro so irascible in dealing with us—that it is probably better the two remain at arms length for yet some years.

WAYNE S. SMITH
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

I have just read Charles Lane's "Fidel and Mr. Smith," and I believe it is a magnificent example of a well-informed, objective analysis of the Cuban crisis. He is right on the mark regarding Castro's manipulation of the constructive engagement policy advanced by theorists such as Mr. Smith. I am so impressed with the article that I have already sent copies to my colleagues in Concilio Cubano inside Cuba. I am sure they will love it.

Last week two more independent journalists were arrested by Castro's secret police. My uncle Gustavo Arcos, a well known and respected member of Concilio, was unofficially warned yesterday by Cuban authorities that should Concilio attempt to meet again they will meet the same fate the four Brothers to the Rescue pilots did three weeks ago. These brave people fighting the last remaining dictatorship in the Western hemisphere are in dire need of more articles like Mr. Lane's.

SEBASTIAN A. ARCOS
Miami, Florida

Liddy letters

To the editors:

In response to Anna Husarska's article on the resumption of postal service in Sarajevo ("Il Postino," March 25), we wish to point out that, although the residents of Sarajevo, and many other areas of the former Yugoslavia, have had little or no postal service for the past four years, they have had a means of contacting relatives and loved ones: the Red Cross message system. Since the start of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia in 1991, over 14 million Red Cross messages have been exchanged, an operation that involved the cooperation of over 100 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. To this day, in Sarajevo alone the CTA still handles nearly 15,000 messages a week. Ninety-five percent reached their destination.

ALAN DORSEY
International Committee of the Red Cross
New York, New York

The end

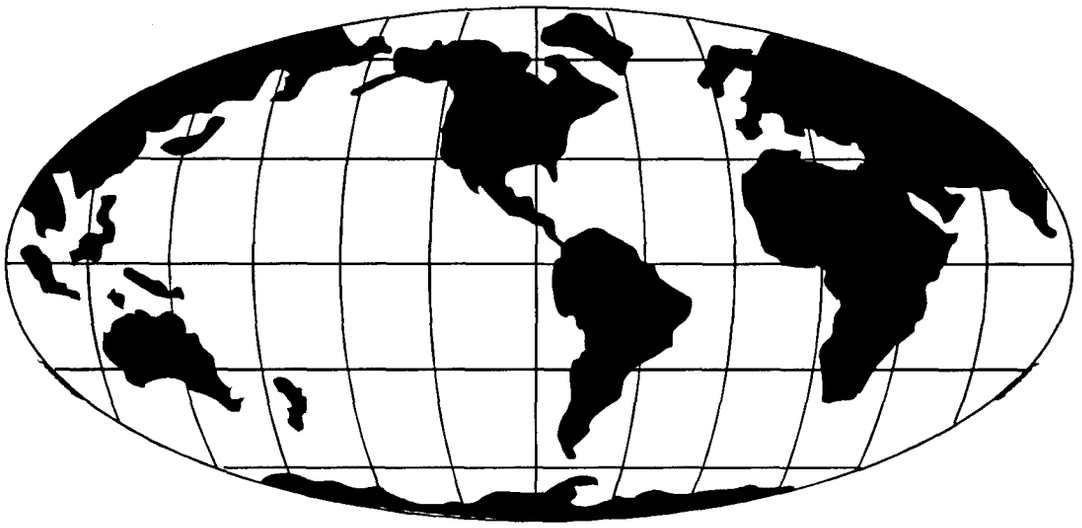
To the editors:

I'm not going to read any more movie reviews by Stanley Kauffmann. If he can't review a movie without giving away the ending ("Getting Better," March 25) he should at least warn his readers. I am (was?) going to see *Fargo*, but now, if I do, I won't be able to enjoy it nearly as much, knowing how it ends the whole time I'm watching it.

PATRICK KELLY
St. Louis, Missouri

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Quality Television Does Exist



The Editors

Canada and the United States share not only a continent, but compelling ideas and pressing problems. *The Editors* is a news show for both countries, addressing issues of mutual interest.

The World In Review

A truly international analysis of current affairs. Reporters and newsmakers from around the globe explore the critical issues of the post-Cold War era. *The World in Review* offers viewers regional perspectives on the news unavailable elsewhere.

Media Watch

Who is the best judge of what is news? If the media is monitoring us, who is monitoring the media? Examining the top stories, veteran reporters and editors tackle these questions every week.

On PBS stations. Check local television listings.

Produced by World Affairs Television

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE NEW REPUBLIC

APRIL 22, 1996

MR. SECRETARY

As we go to press, we do not know the precise circumstances of the plane crash in Croatia that appears to have killed Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, several aides, CEOs and other Americans. But we do know Ron Brown. He was, in many ways, a story of Washington all by himself. He came to the capital in 1973 to do good. He would serve for many years as vice president of the Urban League. Along the way, along with many others, Brown became concerned with making as much money as the high-rollers with whom he associated. In 1981, he went to work as a lawyer and lobbyist at the consummate insider firm Patton, Boggs, and Blow. As one of Washington's most skillful deal-makers, he combined charm and guile, loyalty and cunning. In this, he was one of several black Washingtonians who truly transcended race to become interchangeable with his white peers, and one of the most respected and powerful players of the Beltway game. This was an achievement he wore lightly, but it was an achievement with weight.

While he displayed tact and discretion in advancing the interests of others, however, Brown also evidenced a sad recklessness in his own financial dealings. For the last two years, he had to work under a cloud of scandal that was largely his own making. Most recently, his attorney declined to answer whether Brown had been recompensed by his son who received $160,000 in cash and $500,000 in stock from an Oklahoma gas company seeking influence with the Commerce Department. But, at the same time that he sought to enrich himself and his family, Brown never lost the initial commitment that brought him to Washington. He wanted to do well by his community, his party and his country, and, to a remarkable degree, he succeeded.

Brown was the most skillful political operator the Democrats had. A former law student of Mario Cuomo's, he shared none of the New York governor's sanctimony. After the party suffered a third landslide defeat in the 1988 presidential election, Brown became chairman of the Democratic Party. Many Democrats believed that Brown, who had been an aide to Jesse Jackson and Ted Kennedy, would perpetuate the left-right divisions that had crippled the party. He didn't. Instead, he played the role of healer. He did a great deal to help Bill Clinton win the presidency in 1992. Liberals may have flinched from his enthusiastic lobbying, and rightly so, but Democrats everywhere have much to thank him for. Within the fractious Clinton White House, Brown was widely liked; some wish he had been chief of staff.

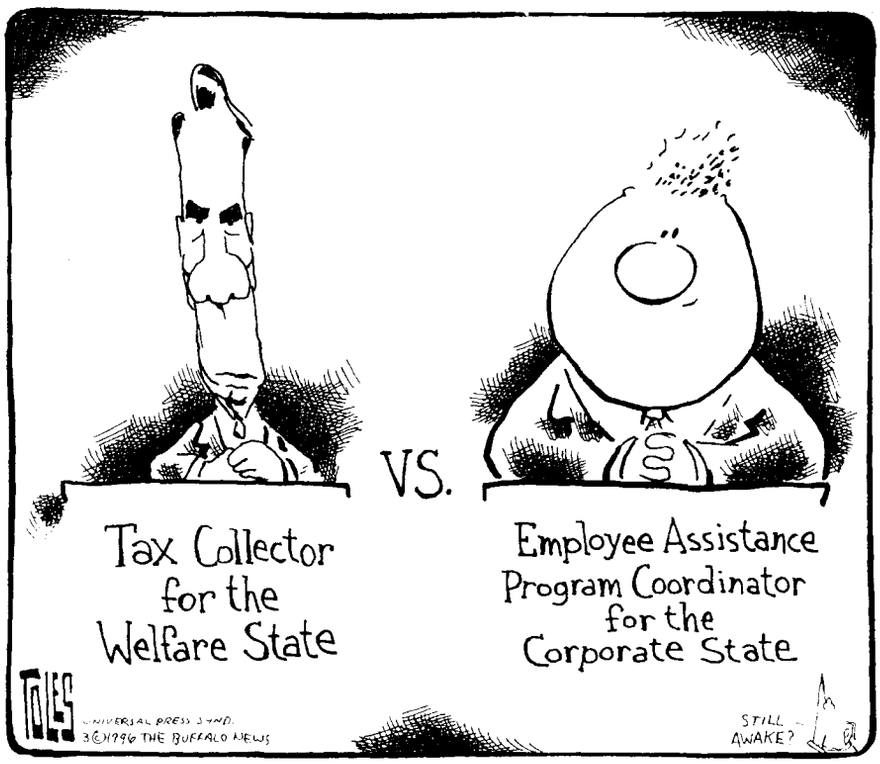
As Clinton's Secretary of Commerce, Brown not only fought his agency's dismantlement, he took a department that had been losing influence since the 1920s and made it the center of the administration's effort to spur American exports. Brown repeatedly put his skills as deal-maker to good use. Two years ago, Brazil was on the verge of granting a lucrative contract to a French electronics firm. Brown went to Rio and came back with a $1.4 billion contract for Raytheon. He played a similar role in gaining a stunning $6 billion aircraft contract for Boeing with Saudi Arabia.

Brown's detractors sometimes compared him to a street hustler, but that was a caricature. Brown was not a product of the ghetto, but of the culture of Washington. He is the latest in a long line of men—stretching from Daniel Webster to Lyndon Johnson and Clark Clifford—who came to Washington without great means, but with enormous savvy and a sense of political mission, and who savored the accoutrements of wealth and power this city offers. Like them, Ron Brown became identified with some of the worst of Washington, but also with its best. •

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOTEBOOK

SIC TRANSIT: Animal rights activists in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, dumped a truckload of manure outside a meeting of the New England Poultry Conference.... The St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana, School Board decided to put *Voodoo and Hoodoo*, a book that includes instructions for casting spells, back on school library shelves.... A Brewster, New York, man shot his pit bull nine times with a bow and arrow to stop it from attacking a teenage girl.... A British man was sentenced to five years in jail for robbing a gas station to pay for his wedding and honeymoon. Police arrested him while waiting for his wedding ceremony to begin.... A Rhode Island man was jailed for puncturing his mother-in-law's esophagus after he stuffed two crucifixes down her throat during an exorcism.... With Great Britain contemplating the slaughter of 12 million cattle, a spokesman for the World Hindu Council offered to build a shelter for "the cows that have gone mad and ... homeless cows."



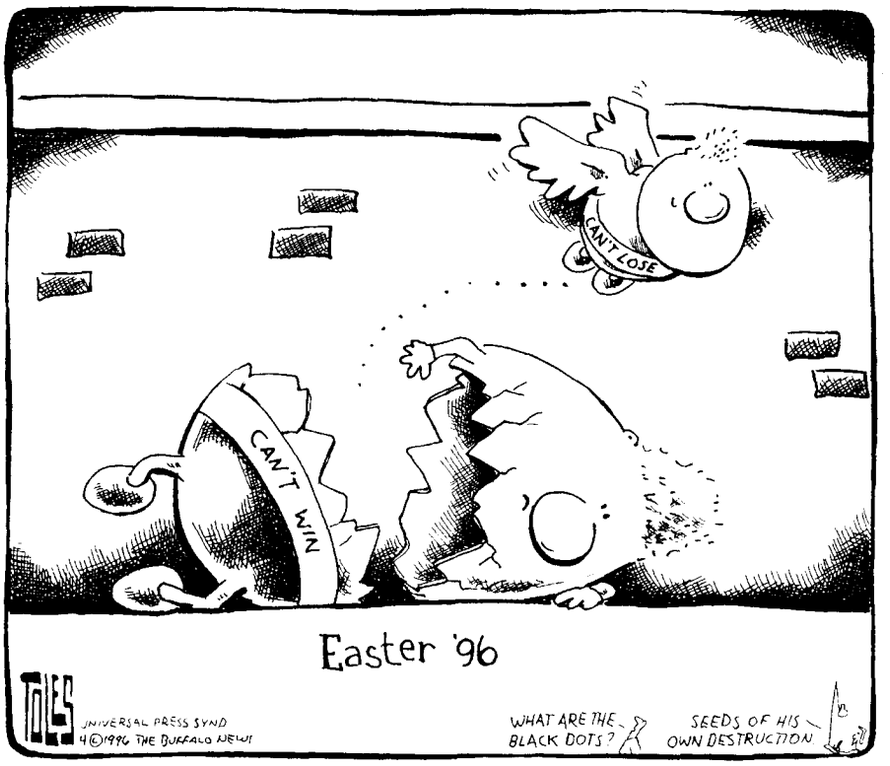
PAPA DON'T PREACH: Groan. Another beleaguered interest group which, rather than make its own positive case, or celebrate its own tradition, prefers to whine. The Catholic League has taken the lead of the Anti-Defamation League, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation and the NAACP and now compiles a yearly litany of complaints to teacher. Its 1995 Report on Anti-Catholicism is particularly lame because it conflates genuine political argument—about euthanasia, abortion or birth control—with puerile pope-bashing. It attacks anyone who might show *Agnes of God* or Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ* as anti-Catholic. It faults a letter to the editor of *The Hartford Courant* opposing school vouchers as anti-Catholic (the letter argues, "One of the leading groups arguing for the implementation of vouchers is the Roman Catholic Church. I find it interesting that the Church looks on the infusion of cash into its schools as the only way to save some of its failing schools"). Among other anti-Catholics: Disney for distributing the movie *Priest*, Tower Records for using the slogan, "Baptize Yourself in ... Brilliant Bargains!" and an A&E show that argued that Pius XII was passive in opposing the Holocaust. Now, of course, anti-Catholic bigotry isn't dead; and in polite, even liberal, circles it's acceptable in a way few other bigotries are. But the paranoia of the Catholic League is a feeble response. Attacks on legitimately sacred objects—the sacraments, for example—are one thing. But general irreverence is no sin in a secular society. The Catholic League, like many other anti-defamation groups, needs to accept that hostility is best met by confident self-expression, not by the defensive crouch of the victim industry.

ON THE OTHER HAND: It's not often we're in agreement with Pat Robertson's "The 700 Club," but *The Los Angeles Times*'s decision to pull a popular comic strip because it contained an explicitly religious message confirms every paranoid religious rightist in the country. The strip is a spectacularly unfunny one (but which ones aren't?) called "B.C." by Johnny Hart. For Holy Week, the cartoonist became especially solemn and presented one of his characters penning a poem about the crucifixion: "His heart has been pierced that yours may beat, and the blood of his corpse washes your feet.... Never to mourn the prince who was downed, for he is not lost. It is you who are found." That was enough for *The L.A. Times*, which has run the strip since 1968. There's no reason on earth that this fair religious comment should not be aired in a metropolitan newspaper. Cartoons should be pulled for one reason only: they're not funny. If "Doonesbury" had run a strip attacking the Catholic Church, it's unthinkable that the *Times* would have pulled it. And rightly so. Small consolation: Jesus made the covers of all three newsweeklies this week. Pity they all suggested He didn't rise from the dead.

HOOP SCHEMES: This year's college basketball poster boy is John Wallace, star forward for the NCAA

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tournament runner-up Syracuse Orangemen. It's not only his fadeaway jump shots and monster dunks that have sports commentators giddy. What really dazzles them is Wallace's decision to stay in school for his senior year and become a model "scholar athlete." The night of the championship game, CBS commentator Billy Packer praised him for sending an important message to players about completing their education. Well, he's sent a message, but it's not exactly the one the talking meatheads think. Wallace reversed his decision to turn pro last year not for educational reasons but for business ones. He got wind he wouldn't be picked as high as originally expected in the NBA draft, and by staying an extra year he's made himself more attractive to pro teams. As Wallace reasoned, "if I took a whole year [to play college basketball], why couldn't I move up to top-ten or top-five status?" The moralistic hype of his boosters notwithstanding, guilt over missing senior-level physics doesn't seem to have entered the equation.



ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE: Arguments against the minimum wage, like the minimum wage itself, are hitting a new low. Last week, readers of *The Wall Street Journal* editorial page were treated to a heartwarming personal story by high-school-dropout-on-welfare-made-good Dee Dee Stanback, who started as a dishwasher in 1979 and went on to manage a restaurant. The lesson? "Raising the minimum wage will destroy the kind of entry-level jobs that gave me, and millions of welfare mothers like me, a chance." But her anecdote, whatever it's worth, is actually an argument *for* raising the minimum wage. In 1979, when she earned it, it was worth, in today's dollars, well over $6.00 an hour. Today it's $4.25, and Democrats want to raise it to $5.15. Maybe they should hike it even higher so that everyone has the same chance Stanback had.

TRAIN WRECK: Even now that Bob Dole has admitted that the presidential election might have a little something to do with jobs and the economy, some conservatives apparently still don't get it. Groups including Gary Bauer's Family Research Council and Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum are all worked up over a job-training bill pending in Congress, claiming that "to grassroots America, it is Big Brother coming into the workplace." Really? Both the House and Senate versions would actually reduce federal involvement by handing a good portion of job-training funding back to the states through block grants—a move that usually has conservatives doing cartwheels. Specifically under fire are two proposals: the updating of vocational education to reflect changes in the economy and the expansion of a computerized job database to help the workers find jobs. That's pretty threatening: to train people for the jobs that actually exist and then help people find them. Puzzling that groups that profess such a passionate concern for "family values" are criticizing a bill designed to help families cope with unemployment—which often tears them apart.

CORRECTION: In last week's article "Hiss's Guilt," by Eric Breindel, a computer error resulted in a dropped line. The truncated sentence should have read: "According to the code-breakers, 'A' is Iskhak A. Akhmerov, a major figure in the Venona papers and one of the most important Soviet agents ever to serve in the United States." We apologize to Mr. Breindel and our readers.

SPIN CONTROL:

Police Officers Hear Cardinal Firmly Oppose Death Penalty

—*The New York Times*, March 25.

Cardinal: Church might OK capital punishment in special cases

—*The New York Post*, March 25.

(Thanks to Addison Golliday of New York, New York.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The U.S.-Syria love-in.

HOLY TERROR

By Barry Rubin

Over the past several weeks, at international conferences prompted by last month's bombings in Israel, President Clinton and Secretary of State Warren Christopher have heralded a new era in the fight against terrorism. From now on, the "international community" will give no quarter to states that fund killers. Even the Arab countries, insisted administration spokesmen, are on board.

Back in the real world, European allies, led by Germany, ignore U.S. efforts to embargo Iran. Russia builds nuclear reactors for Tehran. And the vaunted Arab good guys? They're great in the abstract, but, except for Jordan, they're unwilling to discuss specific groups and their specific backers.

But this is peripheral. The main problem is that the terrorism-fighting Clinton administration treats Syria, a key terrorism sponsor, as a client state, giving it effective immunity from tough action.

Syria rejected America's invitation to last month's anti-terrorism conference at Sharm al-Sheikh, Egypt, and President Clinton stressed that not much should be read into the refusal. But few commented on the strangeness of the invitation itself. After all, the conference was prompted by a series of bombings by Hamas and Islamic Jihad, groups with offices in Damascus, which receive growing Syrian support. And, just days after the conferees' pious words, five Israeli soldiers were killed in Lebanon by Hizbollah, which operates from Syrian-held territory with Hafez al-Assad's consent.

The Clinton administration says this kid-glove treatment is justified by the dream of a comprehensive Middle East peace. Only an Israel-Syria treaty, it argues, will end the Arab-Israeli conflict altogether. But paradoxically, by appeasing Syria so cravenly, the Clinton administration has actually made a treaty less likely. U.S. policy has in fact legitimized a Syrian veto on the peace process, allowing other Arab states to use that as an excuse for their own inaction.

Syria has good reason for being reluctant to make peace with Israel. To do so, Assad would have to toss aside a half century of history and his claim to being the leading Arab militant, which constitutes virtually his sole ideological and strategic asset. Syria's control over Lebanon would be undermined, and it would have to compete economically with Israel.

But Syria is also weak. It has lost its Soviet backing and needs U.S. favor. So Assad has a great interest in feigning flexibility in the hopes of benefiting from its new position as a member in good standing of what used to be called, in cold war days, the "free world."

Thus, it seems glaringly obvious that only U.S. leverage can force Syria to change course. But, rather than show U.S. readiness to do everything possible to isolate Damascus, subvert its control over Lebanon and punish it for various misdeeds unless it cooperates, the U.S. has let Assad believe that he holds the cards and that the U.S. will go easy.

A prime example of this self-defeating strategy was the January 1994 Clinton-Assad summit in Switzerland. Assad was disappointing in the private discussion and even more so in the ensuing press conference. Clinton then reinterpreted Assad's position, crediting him with an explicit acceptance of full peace with Israel. When Christopher's two envoys came to brief Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin they were, Israeli sources say, bubbling over with enthusiasm at the alleged progress made. An outraged Rabin suggested that Assad had simply outmaneuvered them, getting credit for being moderate and flexible without giving anything.

Rabin was right. Assad had simply gained more time. Christopher went to the Middle East a dozen times thereafter, and finally, in December 1995, he announced a great achievement: the bilateral talks were restarting. Actually, Syria merely returned to negotiations it had walked out of months earlier. Then, in March 1996, Syria did launch a major initiative: it proposed returning to the original 1991 Madrid conference's framework. A big step—backward. And, all the while, Damascus ratcheted up its support for Hamas and Hizbollah.

As a result, even dovish Israelis have become increasingly disillusioned with the Syria negotiations. Rabin's replacement by Peres led Washington to hope for a breakthrough based on Israeli rather than Syrian concessions. Peres, however, has come to see this drive as a potential electoral disaster. Israelis may be divided on giving up the West Bank and Gaza, but a large majority oppose handing over the Golan Heights. The issue has already split Peres's Labor Party. An actual deal with Syria—or the imminent prospect of one—could doom both Peres and the peace process, and deliver the upcoming election to Likud.

Blind to this reality, the White House spent February and March pressing Peres to postpone Israel's upcoming election or at least to continue the Syria talks through the Israeli campaign. The White House thinks its international get-togethers, coupled with Israeli concessions to Damascus, will revive the peace process. But, by relieving pressure on Assad (and Yasir Arafat, too), American efforts may accomplish exactly the reverse.

BARRY RUBIN is author of *Revolution Until Victory?: The Politics and History of the PLO* (Harvard University Press).

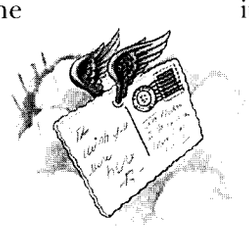
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PLETTENBERG BAY POSTCARD

WHITES

By Richard Stengel

One of the most popular topics of conversation among the *jeunesse dorée* of Plettenberg Bay this past vacation season was who had brought their maids down from Johannesburg for the holidays. One blond, bejeweled young mother had worried about taking her "girl" so far from home. "But she's having a super time," she chirped. "She's just yakking away with all her other little friends," that is, the other Johannesburg maids. The young mother never bothered asking her domestic assistant (the current politically correct term) whether she would have preferred to stay in Johannesburg with her own two small children. At the same cocktail party, a young husband told amused listeners that his maid had never been on a plane before coming down to Plettenberg Bay. "She was bloody petrified," he announced to general chortles. "I told her to hold her nose on takeoff, otherwise it would be sucked into her face."



Sheltered in the lee of the Tsitsikamma mountain range, 300 miles up the coast from Cape Town along the fabled Garden Route, the town of Plettenberg Bay is South Africa's most exclusive summer playground, the place where the elite come to sun and socialize every holiday season. Plett, as it's universally known among its well-heeled denizens, is blessed with an array of crescent-shaped beaches and spectacular views from its hillside homes. At the turn of the century, it was nothing more than a Norwegian whaling station, but by the grand apartheid era of John Vorster in the 1960s Plett's beachfront boasted a section of mansions known as Millionaire's Row, a clutch of luxury hotels and an eighteen-hole golf course.

Now, a 500-unit condominium and golf-course complex is being built in Plett by a partnership wonderfully symbolic of the new South Africa's get-rich-quick ethos: Gary Player, the golfer who was apartheid's one international sports star, and Mketsi Mbeki, the entrepreneurial son of South Africa's deputy president, Thabo Mbeki, a longtime member of the Communist Party in exile. Even before the development is complete, however, Plett's English-speaking residents are getting sniffy about the presence of Afrikaans-speaking folks in nearby caravan parks. No black families here yet, but it won't be long now.

When white South Africans get together these days, in places like Plett and elsewhere, the one topic that overtakes all others is crime. And the crime on every mind is carjacking. Everyone knows someone who has had his or her Mercedes or BMW stolen at gunpoint and will eagerly tell the horrific tale as if it had happened to them. "My sister is divorced and was redoing her house," said one quiet Johannesburg housewife. "She was putting in an alarm system, but hadn't had her electronic gates installed yet. She came home one day, got out of her car to open the gate, and out of nowhere a BMW screeched in front of her, and four blacks who couldn't have been more than 14 got out with guns blazing and made off with her car." Carjackings occur on highways, in parking lots and driveways. Some of the stories have particularly grisly endings, with the drivers and their families killed by nervous young gunmen.

By any standard, crime is bad in South Africa—the murder rate, for example, is five times that of the U.S.—but it is different only in degree from what has gone before. The homes in Joburg have always been fortified with walls and barbed wire; now the walls are a bit higher and the wire a little sharper. Besides, the new crime statistics are somewhat misleading. Before the election, much of the crime in South Africa was labeled political but was in fact simply good old-fashioned crime masquerading as violent politics. Now the crime that has always riven the black townships is spilling over into ritzy white areas, and it has made white folks fearful.

Carjacking has long been a crime in the townships, but whites neither knew nor cared about it. These days, though, the bandits have become more ambitious: Why steal a beat-up Mazda when it's just as easy to filch a new Merc? The police and the local government maintain that more than half of all carjackings are actually insurance scams perpetrated by greedy whites, but the young couples at Plett discount this. For them, anecdotal evidence overwhelms statistics.

In one sense, the fact that crime is the main worry for wealthy whites is actually a sign that all is relatively well in the new South Africa. For the last twenty-five years, whites were more concerned about communism, the *swart gevaar* (the black threat) and the ANC's avowed policies of nationalization and land redistribution. In recent years, crime was an anxiety but not a priority. Today, whites live under a black-ruled government that has bent over backward to make them feel secure. The ANC has embarked on a program of "privatization," and Nelson Mandela routinely beseeches whites not to leave their country. Whites once worried that blacks would take their houses and pools; now it's just their cars.

Before the election, whites at least pretended to be upbeat about democracy, Mandela and the new South Africa. But the election liberated whites as well as blacks, freeing them to return to their mindsets of petty racism without feeling guilty about it. Among the young married couples at Plett, blacks are "the bloody Afs" or "the damned Darkies." Now they don't have to feel contrite about underpaying their maids and garden boys; the Afs have the bloody vote, so why should whites do anything

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for them anymore? They regard affirmative action as a joke, and this is in a country with an overwhelming black majority. These young white couples were never much interested in politics anyway. Now they can dwell on what really concerns them: how to move up from a 5 series BMW to a 7 and not have it stolen.

Since South Africa is now a democracy, whites seem to think society's starting line is perfectly equal. "I saw a quote from Mandela the other day," one white businessman with a chain of computer shops told me. "He was walking around his home area in the Transkei and looking at the shanties and said, 'This is the legacy of apartheid.' But everyone knows that if there never was apartheid those shacks would still be there. How much longer can blacks go on blaming the past? We must all take responsibility for ourselves. They can't go on blaming the past forever." It's been almost two years exactly since Nelson Mandela became president of South Africa; the Nationalists, the party of apartheid, ruled the country for more than four decades. Whites, it seems, are the only ones following Nelson Mandela's injunction to forget the past.

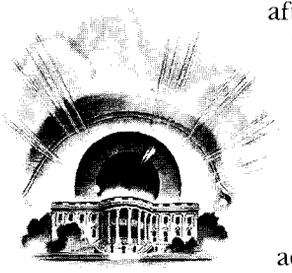
RICHARD STENGEL is a senior writer at *Time*.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

FOUR MORE YEARS

By Matthew Cooper

Bill Clinton was in a good mood. As he flew back to Washington from his recent education summit with the nation's governors, the president talked politics, Arkansas-style. With the rich Hudson River valley unfolding beneath him, Clinton animatedly told a handful of aides seated beside him about past Razorback political figures—who'd won which counties and why others had failed. It was the kind of talk the president loves. And it reflected something. As his re-election campaign gets underway the president is generally feeling up, say colleagues—a far cry from the self-pity and snappishness that marked his mood a year ago. Polls show him walloping Dole. What's not to like?



And, yet, the president and his aides know that the presidential race is sure to tighten; and they have choices to make. Their most immediate dilemma revolves around a possible second Clinton term. Clinton advisers are split over the basic question of whether the president even needs to go before the country and talk about what he would do with four more years. Should he give a big speech about his plans for a second term? Or is it enough for him to rely on January's State of the Union address, in which he enumerated the country's "challenges"? Most aides prefer that Clinton keep mum. And Clinton probably won't announce his re-election until the convention in August. "We've been in this weird lull where the Republicans have been fucking up," says a senior Clinton official. "So why mess with that?"

But that attitude may be shortsighted. First, this "lull" didn't come about simply because the GOP overreached. It came because Clinton shifted and embraced a balanced budget. And while the conventional wisdom has it that Dole is idea-deprived, and Clinton has too many ideas, unless Clinton defines a second term, he risks a flaccid, negative campaign in which he runs merely as the anti-Dole—a brake on Republican efforts to cut Medicare, rewrite environmental rules and so on.

Were Clinton to win this fall, he would be the first Democratic president to be re-elected since FDR. The job of coming up with ideas for such an historic second term has fallen primarily to Bruce Reed, a policy adviser who helped craft the State of the Union address. The main focus of Reed's work is to show the president as a strong leader who can do more than pass bills, who can use presidential power to "leverage" more out of business and just plain citizens. A senior Clinton adviser cites the recent conference of Hollywood moguls who came to the White House to endorse the V-chip, albeit reluctantly. "That's not just passing bills," says the adviser. "That's using executive power." In the coming weeks, the president will also show that he can break gridlock through "reinventing government" measures such as reform of the much-criticized patent office and the introduction of new meat inspection rules meant to update the look-and-sniff system for the age of mad cow disease.

Senior Clinton aides are also thinking hard about how the president can use the Atlanta Olympics to his advantage. They have studied how Ronald Reagan profited from the 1984 Los Angeles games, which segued nicely into the Gipper's "Morning in America" re-election theme. Clinton aides know this year's Olympics probably won't help their boss quite as much. L.A.'s were, after all, the first successful Olympics in years, following the woes that beset the boycotted 1980 games in Moscow, the financially draining 1976 games in Montreal and the terrorist-riven 1972 games in Munich. And, because the Soviet-bloc countries boycotted Reagan's games, the U.S. won a huge proportion of the medals in 1984, adding to L.A.'s luster. Still, Clintonites figure that Atlanta's ebony-and-ivory image of racial harmony can be put to good use by a president who will vow to bring Americans together in a second term. Atlanta's games, says a Clinton adviser, can also give proof of Clinton's leveraging idea—government power helping to produce a fantastic private-sector spectacle. Given all this interest, it's not surprising that, earlier this

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

spring, White House communications director Don Baer and presidential counselor Mack McLarty quietly flew to Atlanta to plan the president's appearance at the games. One irony: Clinton will probably lose Georgia, a state he carried in 1992 but which has since moved right.

This idea of associating the president with a constellation of highly popular issues like the Olympics and meat inspection—positive Willie Hortons, if you will—represents the supremacy of Dick Morris, the president's political consultant. Yet, while Morris rides high at the White House, he is still Velcro for damaging rumors. After last week's Gridiron dinner—not the dinner that Don Imus so roiled, but yet another Washington self-congratulatory affair—a rumor circulated in the capital that Morris had, in the presence of Katharine Graham, doyenne of *The Washington Post*, committed a *faux pas* by chatting away on his cellular phone. Morris doesn't deny picking up the phone during dinner but insists he was just testing it for a skit he would perform later that evening in which he would parody his notorious covert phone calls to Republicans. "I wouldn't have brought the phone if it wasn't for the skit," Morris told me. Fair enough. But the rumor shows how Washington is prepared to believe the worst about Morris.

All this talk about a second term raises an obvious question: What would Clinton really be like freed from the prospect of re-election? Of course, it depends on a thousand variables. How big is the victory? Do the Dems recapture Congress? With many of the most familiar Clinton faces expected to depart at the end of the current term—Leon Panetta and George Stephanopoulos are almost sure to bolt—what kind of role would Al Gore take in staffing the White House? Some Clintonites frame the debate in terms of the Gore White House versus the Rodham White House, meaning Gore's centrist allies such as counsel Jack Quinn battling it out with more liberal staffers. But that seems simplistic and demeaning to Mrs. Clinton, who is not the paleo-liberal of her caricature. No, the biggest force shaping a second term may be Clinton's quest for a legacy, something for the history books. Would Clinton find historic validation in throwing legislation at Congress, LBJ-style? One senior adviser guesses, based on intuition rather than conversations with the president, that Clinton would send a slew of bills to the Hill: "The underclass, Social Security, all of it." Others suggest that the Clinton legacy lies in Irish and Middle Eastern peace treaties.

For now, however, daydreams about the future are being hijacked by fights about the past. The election could easily become mired in history—with Dole campaigning against Clinton's first eighteen months and Clinton campaigning against the Republicans' past eighteen months. Dole grumbles about Clinton's 1993 tax hikes; Clinton gets red-faced about the GOP's 1995 Medicare cuts. (Notably, the popular Medicare issue, on which Morris wanted Clinton to cave, represents a triumph for Stephanopoulos, who urged Clinton to hold fast.) A sour debate about the past? Yuck. High above the ground, the president reminisces about Ozark politics. Below, the campaign lurches toward banality. •

ON THE HILL

WEEDED OUT

By David Hosansky

It's been a rough year for the tobacco industry: a government proposal to regulate nicotine as a drug, allegations that manufacturers ignored research efforts to make cigarettes safer and lawsuits by several states to recover billions in smoking-related health care costs. Still, the news isn't all bad for the industry. Congress, which pared back virtually every other agriculture subsidy in the massive farm bill passed on March 29, has granted one crop immunity: tobacco.

Reforming the tobacco price-support program—which spends several million dollars a year shielding tobacco farmers from market fluctuations—is not even on the congressional radar screen. As John Boehner of Ohio remarks, "There hasn't been any talk of it." Boehner is a GOP member of the House Agriculture Committee who has led the charge against other subsidies. Asked about the issue, committee freshman John Hostettler didn't even know tobacco price supports fell under the committee's jurisdiction.

So what makes the leafy tobacco plant, grown largely in hardscrabble sections of the rural South and execrated for its poisonous end product, such a tough Beltway player? For one thing, most farm programs, like crops, need regular tending. Subsidies and price supports for commodities ranging from milk to sorghum expire about every five years, meaning that Congress must take action to reauthorize them. No big deal, until Newt's slashers came to town last year. This reauthorization cycle, everyone took a whack. Even wheat farmers, previously protected by Bob Dole himself, saw their export subsidies cut by more than half a billion dollars over seven years.

Tobacco, on the other hand, never expires. Thanks to North Carolinian heavies like Jesse Helms and Democratic Congressman Charlie Rose, the tobacco giveaway purrs along on autopilot. Back when the current program was inaugurated in 1982, then-Senator Thomas Eagleton of Missouri proposed subjecting it to scheduled congressional reviews, charging that tobacco supporters "know the program is so odious ... that a second or third look will reveal more of the shortcomings." But Southerners beat back Eagleton's assault.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Another reason for the program's endurance is that it enjoys the backing of both the small farmers who grow the crop and the well-heeled manufacturers who roll it into cigarettes. Such an alliance between growers and manufacturers is unusual. Sugar and peanut price supports, by contrast, have come under attack from soft-drink and candy makers trying to lower their costs.

It is because tobacco is under siege that such political solidarity has emerged. Faced with the threat that tobacco products might be regulated like drugs, cigarette manufacturers need as many friends as they can get. True, the program uses quotas, import limits and tight supplies to pump up domestic tobacco prices to among the highest in the world—but it also spawns support for the tobacco industry across politically crucial areas of the rural Southeast. "Frankly, a hearing room full of tobacco farmers is going to have more appeal than a hearing room full of corporate lobbyists for RJR and Philip Morris," says Daniel A. Sumner, an agricultural economist at the University of California at Davis.

Furthermore, the tobacco subsidy has an even stranger ally: anti-smoking activists. Many are reluctant to take on the program because it inflates tobacco prices and makes cigarettes more expensive. Exploiting this attitude, tobacco's defenders in Congress implausibly frame the issue as one of public health. "You'd be encouraging smoking if you allowed very large corporations and foreign growers to supply tobacco," says Kentucky Representative Harold Rogers. "Cigarettes would be cheaper than dirt."

Democrat Dick Durbin, who was 14 when his father died of lung cancer, sees the issue differently. To him, it is unconscionable for the government to warn citizens of the dangers of smoking and at the same time give the tobacco industry a helping hand. "We're telling everybody tobacco is dangerous and it will kill you, yet the government is subsidizing it," he said. "This defies any kind of rational behavior." Durbin may take a swipe at the price-support program in this year's agriculture appropriations bill, although he expresses little hope of victory.

With few other farm giveaways left, however, tobacco subsidy supporters fear Durbin's effort might gain support. They've even mulled over a preemptive strike—making small changes to the program to prevent their enemies from throwing it out altogether. "Since everyone else has given ... we don't want to be standing out," Rose says.

The Tar Heel Democrat is especially concerned by charges that taxpayers subsidize tobacco growers. Although the program is largely financed through assessments on farmers, the government pays at least $15 million annually to administer it. That's a trifle by Washington standards, but it still makes the program a potential morsel for budget cutters. Rose wants farmers to shoulder the administrative expenses, taking it off the tax rolls entirely.

Even if lawmakers remove all taxpayer support, tobacco could still face an assault this year from conservatives arguing on ideological grounds. The price-support program issues quotas to farmers to limit their production, keeping supplies tight and prices high. That gets some free-market purists smoking. "That's really un-American in my book," says John Frydenlund, who analyzes agricultural issues for the Heritage Foundation.

But people like Frydenlund have aimed most of their fire in recent months at peanut and sugar price supports, which require reauthorization and hence are more visible targets. The congressional conservatives who organized the recent attack on farm programs—Republicans such as Richard Lugar and Richard Armey—seem to have made the same decision.

Tobacco lobbyists have remained mostly on the sidelines, their muscle unneeded—so far. With the price-support program benefiting both small farmers and large manufacturers, they exude confidence that lawmakers won't snuff it out. "This program has worked very well for the farmer and the manufacturer," said Robin Tallon, a lobbyist for the Tobacco Institute. "It's a situation where we prosper together."

DAVID HOSANSKY is agriculture reporter for *Congressional Quarterly.*

CAMBRIDGE POSTCARD

DOWN AND DIRTY

By James Wood

Marjorie Garber, Kenan Professor of English at Harvard, was lost in arcana. Squinting analytically, and fiercely puzzled, she began to split hairs. "May I add a transgressive note?" she asked the lecturer. "As somebody who has appeared on them, there does seem to me a difference between talk shows such as 'Donahue' and 'Oprah' and, say, shows like 'Jenny Jones.' It may only be the difference between modes of Protestant confession and Catholic confession, of course...."

The two-day conference on "Dirt," organized by Garber's two Harvard departments, English Literature and the Center for Literary and Cultural Studies, was a hit. Shy graduate students delivered papers on the nineteenth-century sewer, the orgasm in recent feminist pornography, pest control in the early years of the American republic, fashion magazines and Pears' Soap.

In general, there was an air of prosperous jubilance. The graduate students were smartly dressed and optimistic; Marjorie Garber seemed happily protective. She

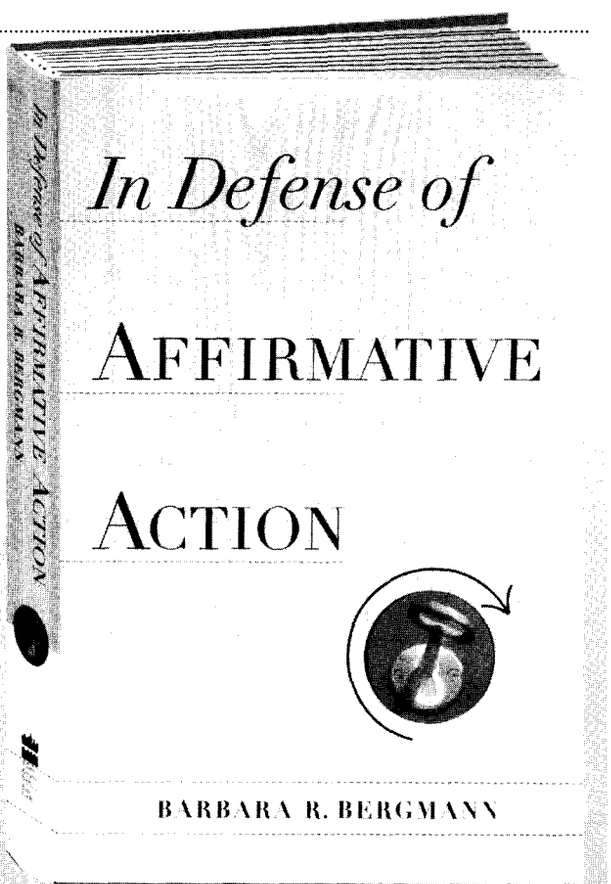
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ARE THE BENEFITS OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION WORTH THE COSTS?

Economist Barbara R. Bergmann cuts through the incendiary rhetoric and offers incontrovertible evidence that affirmative action is the only remedy for the continuing discrimination against men and women of all colors in our society. From debunking the myth that blacks or women "always" win at the expense of the white males, to countering the assertion that affirmative action negatively affects its beneficiaries, Bergmann leads readers through the labyrinth of charges and counter-charges to reveal why affirmative action represents the best—and most moral path—to eliminating racial and sexual discrimination.

"Barbara Bergmann...combines good, compassionate sense with first-rate professional competence and a wonderful capacity for getting and organizing the relevant information."
—John Kenneth Galbraith

"*In Defense of Affirmative Action* spells out through vivid analogues and examples why affirmative action is still desperately needed to keep the doors of educational and employment opportunities open."
—Eleanor Smeal



A New Republic Book

BasicBooks
A Division of HarperCollins*Publishers*
Also available from HarperCollins*CanadaLtd*
http://www.harpercollins.com

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stalked around like a proud pirate. A sober-suited young man with a thin voice welcomed us "to Harvard and to dirt.... Dirt speaks," he mused. "Dirt tells stories, dirt talks back." This I can verify.

How did we get here? Until about Freud, our omissions were not deemed to be aesthetically interesting or deserving of study. Walter Pater, in his essay on style, considers it self-evident that a mark of the great writer is "his tact of omission"—what he consciously leaves out. But Freud noticed that we hide things unconsciously and that what is hidden works a kind of revenge on us by returning to mark the hider. Borrowing Freud, critical and deconstructive theory interests itself not in what is intended but in what is omitted. Our omissions are not necessarily under our control—they are symptoms—and the symptomatic is as interesting to critical theory as the intended. Obviously, if everything we cannot control is as interesting as everything we design, then almost any cultural product, marked by omission and unintended ideological contradiction, is as interesting as any other. *Middlemarch* is symptomatically interesting, but so is MTV.

Pater was interested in good intentions; Garber is interested in bad symptoms. The New Critics of the 1950s, with their talk of "ambiguity" and "tension," were concerned with a text's supreme control of itself; today's theorists hunt for what a text cannot control. Hence dirt—for what better example of what we cannot control? As Jonathan Dollimore, who gave the keynote address, has written: "whatever a culture designates as alien, utterly other ... is rarely and perhaps never so. Culture exists in a relationship of difference with the alien." "Dirt" means anything that we ignore or deem alien—no doubt this explains why, over the course of the conference, it was possible to learn new insights about both Philip Larkin and cockroaches.

Oddly, for all its theoretical cooking, the dirt conference turned out to have a taste for the gristle of the real. It was even anti-theoretical. In essence, a number of graduate students delivered case studies, many of them historical and empirical: Gulf War Syndrome, Florence Nightingale's attitude toward dirt (she was against it). The great providers—Derrida, Barthes, Lacan—went unthanked. Foucault was occasionally mentioned, and Freud much more. But Freud is problematic, since he was a theorist who also believed that he was conducting verifiable science. Professor Dollimore offered an eloquent unwitting example of the conference's contradictions when he declared that he was interested in theory, but that he was more interested in those moments of reality that "resist" theory—what he called "the cultural real." His intellectual life had, he said, become a struggle with "what is stubbornly, contingently there." He seemed unaware that "stubbornly" and "contingently" are rivals. So the trick of the conference was to smuggle in empiricism without ever calling it that.

There is a stimulating general lesson to be learned about how we repress and contain what we call alien; but thirty identical examples of how this theory works are not stimulating, even if the examples concern "the iconography of the Tampax." This is what made the conference weightless: not its subject matter, but that its participants knew what the answers would be before they had started. Each speaker unrolled her mat—and each had the same pattern.

A paper on Judy Blume's sex-novel for young adults, *Forever*, gives an idea. Two giggly and squirming Ph.D. students from the Harvard English Department, Aviva Briefel and Sianne Ngai, spoke about the function of the bathroom in this book. The bathroom, we were told, is "a space into which deviance disappears." Not only do people lock themselves in the bathroom; but dirt—specifically, masturbation—is locked in the bathroom, too. *Forever* is a highly normative text that needs to repress and contain any hint of sexual otherness. The bathroom is the ideal narrative dumping ground for the alien. The bathroom "acts like Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*; it is an ageless, institutional space which must resist change."

After this, the *Mona Lisa* was not the only participant with a smirk. These speakers seemed awkward. Not so Marti Hohmann, who filled a room with her paper on orgasm in feminist pornography. Having spent several months on such texts as *Big Ed*, she had decided that "we are living through a pornographic renaissance." Like many of the speakers, she cited Garber's work: "As Marjorie Garber notes" was one of the most popular phrases. The most popular gesture was the finger-quote sign, used to provisionalize any word of contention, such as "truth," "good" and "book." One grew accustomed to seeing the two fingers cocked and twitching like rabbits' ears on almost any pretext.

At one point, Hohmann said: "I do believe that pornography is literature; that it's worthy of literary study." But one does not necessarily follow from the other. Many texts may seem worthy of literary study; but part of the purpose, and the joy, of literary study is to determine what is literature and what is not—to decide what is "worthy."

For art is not merely an example, or a by-product, of human busyness. Sewers and soap are examples of how communities organize themselves and are areas of legitimate inquiry. But artworks differ from such products because they exist for our higher contemplation, not merely our use. Artworks exist to be judged (and in turn judge us). The student of literature, unlike the historian, is always engaged with the question of value, and hence with the value of subject matter.

Some of the speakers knew this. A rather solemn student from Emory University, Scott Samuelson, delivered a fine paper in which he argued that "the philosopher's duty is not to raise the level of dirt to a higher level, which would be a gross aesthetic and metaphysical error, but to account for its presence." This was properly said, though on the whole most of the participants

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

did not sound like John Calvin. More characteristic was Dina Smith's trivial, amusing decoding of the best-selling cookbook *White Trash Cooking*. She had come with visual aids—slides of some of the book's finished recipes. Like all visual aids, they were almost invisible. As a daunting blur flickered on the wall, someone behind me offered his partner a critical decoding of his own: "I *think* they're dumplings." •

The fall of the holy computer.

POISONED APPLE

By Randall Stross

Apple Computer's disclosure last week that it expects to show a $700 million after-tax loss for the second quarter came as a surprise to Wall Street analysts, who expected a forecast of red ink but nothing quite like this. If this loss indeed comes to pass, it will set a new record for the company, which has had all too many bad quarters in recent years. Yet the most interesting aspect of Apple's announcement was the reaction that followed outside of the Apple campus: some sighs, some praise—for the new chief executive Gilbert Amelio's willingness to face up to the magnitude of the problems he has inherited—and some anguished wondering once again about Apple's place in the firmament of personal computing. As usual, journalists treated Apple's plight with uniquely empathetic concern.

Apple is something of a rarity in American capitalism, a company that seems to have the media rooting for its recovery with a passion equal to that of its own shareholders. The irony is that it's just this sentimental protectiveness extended to Apple that lulled the company into complacency in the first place. A company unstained by the compromises that sullied others didn't need to heed the same rules, or so the company assumed. And we consumers were just as complicit in this mess as Apple's own maladroit executives. We acquiesced to Apple's pretentious purism—even encouraged it—and thereby helped ensure its decline.

It may be useful to recall why it was that Apple in the late 1970s—with twentysomething co-founders Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak presiding over the meteoric sales of the Apple II computer—became a darling of the business press. The mythic origins had something for everyone, did they not? The company began in the garage of Jobs's parents, its starting capital the proceeds from the sale of the founders' HP calculator and VW bus. The two Steves came up with the first affordable computer that was actually useful; almost overnight, it became the heart of a multi-hundred-million-dollar business. And, when the IBM Personal Computer finally emerged in 1981, Apple responded by repackaging its image as countercultural chic and conjuring up a Manichean world. On the one side were arrayed the dark forces of mediocrity and sameness (IBM and its ilk); on the other—Apple, the creator of computers for the "rest of us"—i.e. everyone who was not an unthinking cipher, in thrall to corporate orthodoxy.

The introduction of Apple's Macintosh in 1984 brought to the mass market of computing some important innovations that had been developed or refined at the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center. These included the mouse, the picture-oriented layout based on icons, and word-processing software that displayed the fonts and layout as they would really appear on paper. Apple also introduced the first laser printer under five figures and built networking hardware and software into the machines and extra equipment such as printers. The equipment could be unpacked from the box, hooked together by an amateur and made fully operational in a jiffy. Though every two steps forward were accompanied by a step backward—the underpowered microprocessor, insufficient memory, no hard drive—the net effect was a package of improvements that rightly wowed new computer users.

Apple wasn't content, however, to base its pitch merely on better products. Instead, it promoted its computer as the incarnation of an entire system of values, the silicon embodiment of nonconformism. Symmetry demands that Pristine Good be paired with Evil Incarnate, and, as the IBM-compatible wing of the PC industry grew far beyond faltering IBM's ability to singlehandedly direct it, a new demonology was required. Microsoft replaced IBM as Apple's nemesis—oddly, since Microsoft alone among the larger software developers had been willing, early on, to take a chance on Apple's new machine, producing Word and Excel, the two most popular applications for the Mac.

Even Apple's print advertising—with its burnished prose given generous allotments of space—seemed to appeal to you, the hyper-smart person who could distinguish the superior product from the slipshod. It was a variation of the "You're Special, I'm Special" school of advertising. The problem was, Apple succumbed to its own propaganda, and so did its customers, who seemed only too happy to pay a significant amount more for a "premium" personal computer. If BMW can get away with it, Apple figured, so can we. As for all those consumers the company hadn't yet won over, well, that was their problem. Steve Jobs did not tolerate fools or, as he was wont to describe them, "bozos," gladly, and his customers adopted a similar attitude.

To their credit, Apple's partisans projected a fervor seldom seen on the Microsoft-Intel side of the industry. But this same fervor allowed Apple to ignore the obvious evidence that techno-snobbery would be the company's eventual undoing. It should have paid attention to a cautionary model from outside the computer indus-

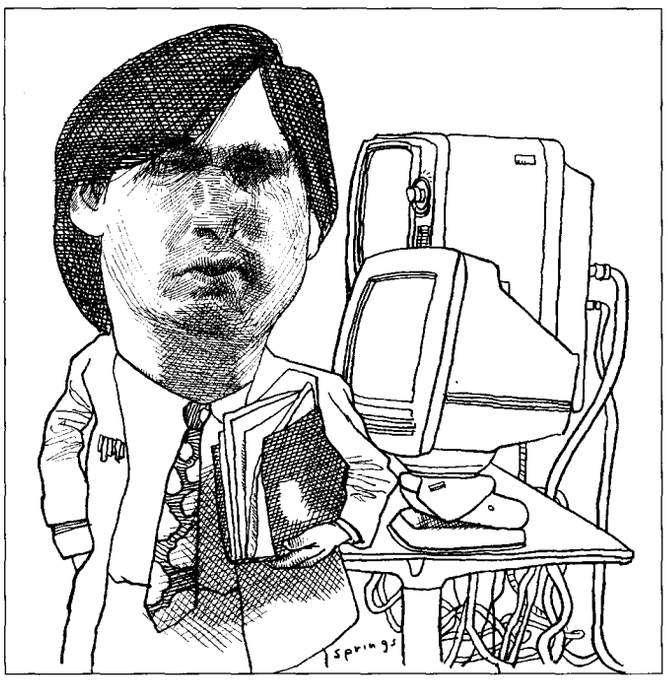
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

try—the sad tale of Sony and the Betamax videotape. If they think about it at all, many people probably still think of the Beta-VHS war of the early 1980s as a face-off between a technically superior standard (Beta) and an inferior alternative, in which, puzzlingly enough, the inferior prevailed. In fact, Beta's technical superiority was never that clear-cut—though its graphics quality was slightly better than VHS's, its recording capacity was less. But, unlike Sony, the coalition of companies that owned VHS patents were committed to keeping prices down, expanding both the market for VCRs in general and for VHS in particular. Sony, on the other hand, regarded Beta as superior and complacently chanted the BMW litany: a premium product commands.... For a while video stores stocked tapes in both formats, but, as soon as the VHS coalition flooded the market with low-priced machines, its advantage snowballed, and stores minimized their inventory costs by buying new titles in just one format, VHS.

If only Apple had taken notice. The key element in the Beta-VHS competition was what economists call "network externalities." This is an arcane term for a simple idea: the more people who join a network the more valuable joining that network becomes. Microsoft understood with the same clarity as the VHS coalition that "network externalities" would propel an early market-share leader to a position of dominant share. The company priced licensing fees charged to PC manufacturers for DOS, and then for Windows, Microsoft's graphical veneer, low, low, low. Apple couldn't have been smugger. The company and its loyal acolytes clung to a comforting syllogism: cool was Apple's sole possession; cool commanded a premium price; cool would win. From their haughty perch, "Win-doze" was a joke, beneath contempt. The three CEOs who presided over Apple during its road to ruin—Steve Jobs, John Sculley and the recently dismissed Michael Spindler—all shared the conviction that product superiority was not just a competitive strength of the company, but a permanent sign of grace. The famous line that Jobs used to recruit Sculley from Pepsi to Apple—"Do you want to spend the rest of your life selling sugared water or do you want a chance to change the world?"—beautifully distills the hubris.

And what kind of strategy did cool produce? Well, take Spindler, for one, whose greatest claim to fame may be an uncanny knack for underestimating demand for the Macintosh models buyers like most and overestimating demand for those they like least. Hundreds of millions of dollars were lost in sales last holiday season because the most popular models simply could not be had for love nor money. Meanwhile, inventory write-offs needed to clear warehouses of unwanted models led to a $69 million quarterly loss (at the time, that seemed horrific; compared to the impending $700 million loss, it now seems a pittance). On Spindler's watch, the company also announced an impending cut of 1,300 jobs. All this, keep in mind, when the actual number of Macintosh boxes sold was at an all-time high, and corporate revenues, too, were at a record high-water mark.

Outside the company, Apple-chic has proven to be remarkably resilient. Inside the company, the faithful distanced themselves from the executive dolts they blamed for falling market share and distinguished between the company (bad) and its principal product, the Mac (forever untarnished)—a sort of "When Bad Companies Happen To Good Products" analysis. By 1990, however, even Apple's die-hard evangelists experienced the shock of a rival church. Microsoft's Windows 3.0 appeared and soon established itself. By 1994, the tenth anniversary of the Mac's introduction, Apple could no longer be viewed as a hopeful beacon leading the unwashed to the Light. The Appleites, however, retreated into denial. Journalist Steven Levy, like other Mac adherents, simply defended the machine itself and gave us a book-length valentine, *Insanely Great: The Life and Times of Macintosh, the Computer That Changed Everything.* (Like all true Appleites, Levy adopted the linguistic affectation first coined by Steve Jobs and now used as a kind of password among the cognoscenti: withholding the article "the" in front of "Macintosh.")



STEVE JOBS BY JOHN SPRINGS FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Even now, amid Apple's well-publicized difficulties, Apple outsiders continue to exalt the Macintosh as if it were something more than what it is, a nicely integrated hardware-software combination that helped advance the industry but that exacted from prospective consumers too high a premium in price for far too long. In February, for example, Yale computer scientist David Gelernter contributed a *New York Times* op-ed piece in which he praised the company for doing "more than any other company to make technology beautiful" and the Mac for providing "elegance." Apple could not be permitted to disappear before completing its historic mission. "Go forth," he begged the company, "and teach us elegance."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Please. If Apple could have summoned the will to act before Windows 3.0 gained 110 million users (and counting), it would not have been reduced to pleading for elegance. It actually took Apple's own competitor-to-be to explain why it would be in Apple's own interests to make the Macintosh software widely available. Bill Gates approached Apple in 1985, five long years before Windows 3.0 appeared, asking Apple to license the Macintosh operating-system software to other hardware vendors so that consumers would have more choices, which would in turn lead to more technical innovation and make the Macintosh software standard a more appealing option to prospective buyers. Sculley passed, and his successor, Spindler, moved with agonizing slowness in granting licenses to a handful of small vendors and spurning propositions from many others. Most observers say Apple's reticence in this area stemmed from a reluctance to cannibalize its own hardware sales. But another powerful reason was that licensing could compromise "elegance." Letting other hardware vendors innovate—a benefit that Gates astutely noted would come if Apple were to make the Macintosh system software available to others—also meant that the resulting machines would not be identical to Apple's own, and the tightly integrated melding of hardware and software would be diminished. That's the trade-off customers in the Windows world accepted—greater choices led to a more attractive standard, which led to more customers, which led to prices driven down by greatly expanded volume, which in turn attracted still more hardware vendors.

Apple's new CEO, Gil Amelio, a physicist with long experience in the semiconductor industry and none in the personal computer industry, does not appear to have the same sentimental attachments to the purism of Apple's past. In his first weeks in his new position, he has moved quickly to sign new licensing pacts with Motorola and others, trying to make up for the years lost by his dithering predecessors. But Apple still suffers from the defection of software applications companies. And, if its customers see that Macintosh versions of Windows software applications do not keep up, or simply never appear, they will eventually defect to Windows, causing even more Macintosh software developers to lose heart and making the future of the Macintosh look bleak indeed. That's why Apple needs to sacrifice its immediate interest in selling its own hardware and entice as many external vendors as possible to produce Macintoshes, too.

Amelio hasn't revealed exactly what he has in mind for stanching life-threatening losses to the company; he has promised to announce his plans in May. But, for the hard core, the more Apple succeeds in expanding its hardware licensing and winning back market share, the less distinctive Apple will become. To my mind, that's far from bad. Apple's exceptionalism was an exercise in self-delusion that ultimately hurt the interests of its own customers. Computer boxes are—computer boxes. There's no need to dress them up in fancy philosophical ribbons.

RANDALL STROSS is the author of a book about Microsoft that will be published in the fall by Addison-Wesley.

Affirmative action's posthumous life.

THE DAY THE QUOTAS DIED

By Jeffrey Rosen

Great Supreme Court decisions, for all their theatricality, are notoriously weak engines of social change. The commands of *Brown* v. *Board of Education* weren't implemented until decades later; *Roe* v. *Wade* confirmed a trend toward the liberalization of abortion laws that had been percolating in the states. But, a year after it was handed down, *Adarand* v. *Peña* is proving to be a startling exception. Like a boulder thrown into a placid pond, *Adarand* has been sending ripples through the lower courts in ways that are already transforming affirmative action as we know it. A recent decision in Texas ventures to suggest that all affirmative action in higher education may be unconstitutional in light of *Adarand*. And a lawsuit in New Mexico is prompting the Clinton administration to reconceive its entire federal procurement policy, in the hopes of preserving racial set-asides on a more limited scale. What follows is an anatomy of the wages of *Adarand*.

Adarand, you'll recall, was a terse 5-4 decision last June, in which Justice Sandra Day O'Connor held that "all racial classifications, imposed by whatever federal, state or local governmental actor, must be analyzed by a reviewing court under strict scrutiny." Emphasizing that "benign" racial classifications should be viewed just as skeptically by judges as malignant ones, she hinted that

continued on page 24

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Limón Dance Company in Phyllis Lamhut's *Fantomes* © Photo: Tom Caravaglia

© Philip Morris Management Corp. 1996

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts: 25th Year Anniversary

It's America's First Stage. Offering 25 years of monumental performances to raise spirits and standards and bring audiences to their feet. This historic season will highlight *America Dancing*. A mesmerizing re-union of our country's most creative choreographers that land us with one perfectly arched foot in the past and the other touching down gracefully in the future. Marvel at the work of such originators as Isadora Duncan and Martha Graham. Then leap forward to those they inspired: Paul Taylor and José Limón. Philip Morris salutes the Kennedy Center and its innovative vision of dance. A most stately art. For further information call: (800) 444-1324.

PHILIP MORRIS COMPANIES INC.

Kraft Foods, Inc.
Kraft Foods International, Inc.
Miller Brewing Company
Philip Morris International Inc.
Philip Morris U.S.A.

Supporting the spirit of innovation.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

affirmative action programs might be justified, under narrow circumstances, as a response to "the unhappy persistence of both the practice and the lingering effects of racial discrimination against minority groups in this country." And that, pretty well, was that: O'Connor refused to say what she thought about the racial classification at issue in *Adarand* itself, a federal set-aside for a Hispanic-owned guardrail company in Colorado that effectively prevented the only guardrail company owned by a white male in the state from placing bids.

O'Connor's silence was especially conspicuous on another point. She said nothing at all about the fate of the *Bakke* case, the landmark 1978 opinion by Justice Lewis Powell, which held that education is different than other spheres of state action, and therefore public universities are freer to resort to racial preferences than other state actors. But others are scrambling to interpret her silence. On March 18, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit struck down the affirmative action program adopted by the University of Texas law school and ordered university officials, under pain of punitive damages, to adopt a color-blind admissions process immediately. The law school faculty, eager to confront O'Connor with the radical consequences of the color-blind principle, is planning faithfully to implement the lower court's command and expects to admit a virtually all-white class in 1998. Meanwhile, the state is appealing to the Supreme Court; the Texas Attorney General has engaged Laurence Tribe to conduct the oral argument; and the case, if the Supreme Court agrees to hear it, has the potential to be one of the most significant decisions since *Roe* v. *Wade*.

Writing more as a pundit than a lower-court judge, Jerry E. Smith of the Fifth Circuit took it upon himself to predict the law rather than to apply it. In his freewheeling opinion, Judge Smith began by suggesting that, in the wake of *Adarand*, "the use of race to achieve a diverse student body cannot be a state interest compelling enough to meet the steep standard of strict scrutiny." Justice Powell in *Bakke*, of course, had held otherwise: he said that state universities could take race into account in admissions decisions to achieve the benefits of diversity *or* as remedy for past discrimination. According to Smith, however, Powell was freelancing: "Justice Powell's argument in *Bakke* garnered only his own vote and has never represented the view of a majority of the Court in *Bakke* or any other case." Moreover, Smith predicted, Powell's view that achieving diversity in higher education was a constitutionally compelling interest would not gain five votes on the Supreme Court today. *Adarand*, not *Bakke*, was the law of the land, said Smith, and, under *Adarand*, the Texas program could not stand.

There are many ways for lower courts to question affirmative action, but overruling Supreme Court decisions is not one of them. And, even if one indulges Smith's cynical attempt to count votes rather than to apply existing law, he is a clumsy vote counter. Smith is wrong, first of all, to suggest that Lewis Powell's decision in *Bakke* represented Powell's views alone: he overlooks Part V-C of Powell's opinion, joined by five justices, which holds that "In enjoining [the University of California at Davis] from ever considering the race of any applicant ... the courts below failed to recognize that the State has a substantial interest that legitimately may be served by a properly devised admissions program involving the competitive consideration of race and ethnic origin." In his Foreword to *The Harvard Law Review* the year *Bakke* was announced, John Hart Ely quoted this language and concluded: "*That* is the Opinion of the Court in *Bakke*. I'll take it."

As an oracle of tea leaves, Smith is also inept. On the current Court, at most four justices—Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas and, far more tentatively, William Rehnquist and Anthony Kennedy—have committed themselves to the proposition that the Constitution is color-blind in all circumstances. Four justices—Stephen Breyer, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, David Souter and John Paul Stevens—have strongly hinted that they would, in the case of education at least, accept forward-looking justifications for affirmative action—such as diversity—as well as backward-looking justifications, such as racial compensation. Like most contested issues of social policy, therefore, the future of *Bakke*, and of affirmative action itself, rests on the cryptic impulses of Sandra Day O'Connor.

Divining Justice O'Connor's wishes is never easy, least of all for Justice O'Connor herself. But her previous writings about race and diversity look very similar to Powell's position in *Bakke*. (See "School Colors" by Akhil Amar and Neal Katyal, TNR, July 17 & 24, 1995.) In the *Wygant* case in 1986, O'Connor cited Powell for the proposition that "a state interest in the promotion of racial diversity has been found sufficiently 'compelling,' at least in the context of higher education, to support the use of racial considerations in furthering that interest." Four years later, in the *Metro Broadcasting* case, O'Connor again cited Powell for the proposition that "race-conscious measures might be employed to further diversity only if race were one of many aspects of backgrounds sought and considered." Finally, in her tortured opinions in the voting rights cases, O'Connor has said that government can be race-conscious, as long as it's not too obvious about it.

Another consideration may save *Bakke* from the block. As their showy refusal to overturn *Roe* v. *Wade* suggests, O'Connor and Kennedy are inclined to uphold landmark precedents, even ones they think are wrong, when social expectations have crystallized around them. A vote to overturn *Bakke*, and to forbid all racial preferences in higher education, would be far more socially disruptive than a decision allowing each state to make up its own mind about abortion restrictions. The lower court found that the average grades and LSAT scores of black and Mexican-American applicants are so much lower than those of other applicants that, without racial preferences, Texas could have admitted, at most, nine black and eighteen Mexican-American candidates, all of whom were being courted by the top law schools in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

country. Extending the color-blind principle to all universities, in short, would precipitate resegregation on a national scale.

If one were determined to play Judge Smith's parlor game, and to predict how the current Supreme Court would decide the *Hopwood* case, the safest bet is that the opinion would look very much like *Bakke* itself. And Justice O'Connor would be in the Powell seat, refining Powell's anxious insistence that race can be used as a "plus factor," but not the "decisive factor," in admissions decisions, that it must be "simply one element—to be weighed fairly against other elements"—to achieve genuine, rather than cosmetic, diversity.

So let's assume that *Bakke* stands. The real drama of the *Hopwood* case is that the University of Texas's affirmative action program might *still* fall. Judge Smith, in other words, could have ruled against the university without presuming to overturn *Bakke*. Powell never specified the mystic point at which a benign "plus factor" became a malignant "decisive" factor; but he did stress that the search for racial diversity should not "insulate" minority candidates from "competitive consideration" with white candidates who might bring diverse perspectives of their own. And *Hopwood* tests the limits of Powell's euphemism. The gap between the test scores of white and black candidates is so stark that, to admit more than token numbers of minority candidates, race must be used not as a "plus factor" but as the decisive factor in case after case.

Smith is typically coarse in his attempt to apply the Powell distinction between genuine diversity and cosmetic diversity. In the search for students with diverse viewpoints, Smith suggests, race is no more rational a proxy for diversity "than would be choices based upon physical size or blood type of applicants." This stretches a familiar criticism past the breaking point: of course, African American students from all economic backgrounds share common experiences that type-O students do not, such as the lived reality of racial slights in America. But Smith's hyperbole masks another unsettling truth: if racial "plus factors" are not permitted to loom larger than other proxies for diversity, if *Bakke* is rigorously applied, then the entering class at Texas might be only slightly less white than a color-blind system would produce.

Of course, the real reason the Texas faculty, like most law faculties, supports affirmative action isn't primarily to encourage "viewpoint diversity," or even to atone for the law school's own dramatic history of discrimination in the 1940s. The faculty simply thinks it would be inconceivable to have a virtually all-white student body in the state's leading law school, excluding the state's two most numerous and most politically powerful minority groups from more than token representation. This is a perfectly defensible judgment, on educational as well as political grounds, especially if one sees law schools (unlike, say, chemistry graduate schools) as microcosms of democracy, where students should learn how to interact with the various groups they will encounter as lawyers and citizens. But the Supreme Court has rejected this mimetic or representational justification as "diversity for its own sake," and so Texas, unable to defend its program openly, is forced to tie itself in knots.

The *Hopwood* case suggests that universities wishing to defend their affirmative action policies in court will face an increasingly uphill battle—even if *Bakke* stands. As judicial scrutiny becomes more intense, and the distinction between "plus factors" and quotas is more rigorously enforced, entering classes may become more white than they are now. But the core principle of the *Brown* decision—education is different than other spheres of state action—will probably save affirmative action in higher education in some limited form.

Other forms of affirmative action, by contrast, may well be doomed in the new constitutional order. In particular, many of the racial set-asides in federal procurement, the largest federal affirmative action programs, are hard to reconcile with the cold logic of *Adarand* and are already beginning to be dismantled through a combination of judicial pressure and political backpedaling. Although the Clinton administration hopes to preserve the set-asides in a limited form, its most recent proposals are so elaborately legalistic that they may only hasten the set-asides' demise.

Like a retreating army, the Clinton administration has reacted to the *Adarand* decision by making a series of tactical concessions and then trying against the odds to hold its ground. The White House's retreat has been exemplified, and partly driven, by a little-noticed lawsuit in New Mexico, *McCrossan* v. *Cook*. The population of New Mexico is about 50 percent non-white, and yet the Department of Defense, in its effort to satisfy national "goals" set by the Small Business Administration, has set aside virtually *all* of its road-building contracts at the White Sands military base, the largest military base in the country, for minority-owned construction firms. This is racial pork-barrel of the crudest kind. Faced with certain defeat in court, the Clinton administration announced last October that it would repeal the set-aside in question, the so-called "rule of two," under which contracting officers can limit bidding on particular contracts to minority firms only. But, in an odd hat trick, the administration then announced that the Department of Defense would continue to set aside the same contracts for the same minority firms under a panoply of different federal preference programs, most notably the so-called 8(a) program, which it was determined to preserve. On April 2, a federal judge in Las Cruces, denying a motion for a preliminary injunction, suggested that the 8(a) program "may survive strict scrutiny as articulated in *Adarand*." He was wrong.

8(a) is the grandmother of all federal and state set-aside programs. In 1994, it accounted for about $4.9 billion, or 2.7 percent, of all government procurement. Created by Congress in 1978, it covers everything the federal government buys and builds—from paper in Boston to plastic pens in Idaho to military bases in New Mexico; and it allows federal agencies, through the Small Business Administration, to set aside contracts involving less than $3 million for businesses controlled

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and operated by "socially and economically disadvantaged persons." These are defined, by statute and regulation, to include black Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Asian Pacific Americans, Subcontinent Asian Americans and women.

The 8(a) set-asides, which the Clinton administration defends, are analytically indistinguishable from the "rule of two" set-asides, which the administration repealed. Both programs insulate certain racial groups from "competitive consideration" with other racial groups, using race as the decisive factor rather than as a plus factor in assigning public benefits, thus violating O'Connor and Powell's central distinction. And both programs are employed to meet federal "goals" that have no connection to discrimination suffered by particular minority groups in particular regions of the country.

Because the federal government makes no attempt, in establishing its annual "goals," to account for the availability of minority firms in a particular industry or geographic location, the only way for agencies to meet their goals is to concentrate their minority contracting in certain fields, such as construction, where minority-owned firms actually exist. In ten states, as Clinton's affirmative action task force acknowledged last June, more than 40 percent of all construction contracts awarded to small businesses went to minority businesses, often under sheltered competition. At some sites, such as the White Sands military base, virtually all contracting is with minority businesses. For the white male proprietors who are shut out entirely from the bidding process, it's hard to imagine a more intrusive burden.

Tacitly acknowledging that the 8(a) program, in its current form, can't survive close judicial scrutiny, the Clinton administration is about to make an elaborate attempt to save it. Piecing together the precise contours of the administration's unpublished proposals is difficult—they were misleadingly reported in last month's *New York Times*—but Associate Attorney General John Schmidt told me that under the new rules, "if any agency is going to go beyond outreach, if they're actually going to use race as part of decision-making, they would have to observe limits determined market by market, industry by industry." For each national and regional market in which the federal government does business, Schmidt told me, the Office of Federal Procurement policy would make an "estimate of what level of contracting you would have achieved in the absence of discrimination." By examining Census data showing the numbers of minority firms in each market, the federal procurement office would set "benchmarks" for the percentage of minority firms that should be awarded contracts; but Schmidt said the benchmarks could be "adjusted upward if there is some evidence that discrimination has suppressed the availability of minority firms in that industry." A blue-ribbon commission—the Council of Economic Advisers has been suggested—would certify that, in the absence of discrimination, 25 percent of all construction dollars in Colorado, for example, would have been awarded to minority firms. The Department of Defense could then set aside no more than 25 percent of its Colorado construction dollars for minority firms in sheltered competition.

Schmidt is the president's lawyer, not his policy adviser, and he deserves credit for honestly trying to craft the most carefully tailored defense of racial set-asides that a lawyer could devise. Moreover, the broad categories of set-asides are mandated by Congress; and, until Congress repeals the set-aside laws, the president is constitutionally required to enforce them. Legally as well as politically, however, the president's decision to mend, not end, federal set-asides is a serious mistake. The entire project is doomed by a simple truth: the Supreme Court will only uphold federal racial set-asides in light of convincing evidence of past discrimination by the federal government itself; but, for almost twenty years, the federal government has been discriminating in favor of minority contractors rather than against them. Minority firms, furthermore, are only eligible for set-asides during the first nine years of their existence. All the current beneficiaries are companies formed after 1987, which makes the claim that they have suffered from state-sponsored discrimination especially implausible.

Furthermore, when the numbers are examined honestly, minority businesses turn out to be overrepresented, rather than underrepresented, in federal procurement. In 1994, 25 percent of all federal dollars awarded to small business went to minority businesses, although minorities own 9 percent of businesses in the country. The administration tries to conceal this number by emphasizing that only 4.1 percent of all federal procurement dollars went to minority businesses, but this is the wrong comparison. Most procurement dollars go not to small businesses but to huge Fortune 500 companies, such as Lockheed and Exxon, that have no ethnic corporate identity but are owned by shareholders of all races.

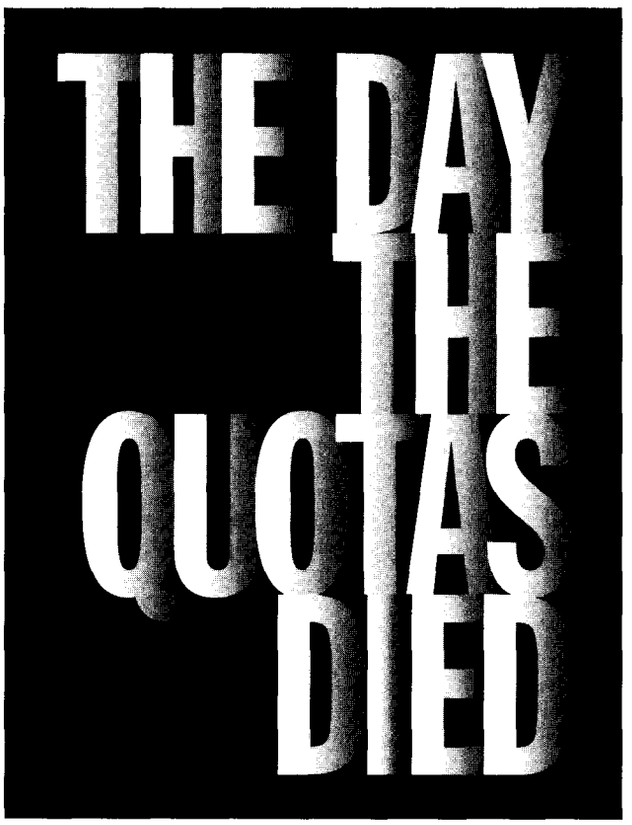
The administration proposes an empirical project of staggering complexity and expense; but, to convince the Supreme Court, the project would have to be far more complicated still. For the past five years, many states and cities have been commissioning what are now called "disparity studies," based on Justice O'Connor's suggestion in the 1989 *Croson* case that "where there is a significant statistical disparity between the number of qualified minority contractors willing and able to perform a particular service and the number of contractors actually engaged by the locality or the locality's prime contracts, an inference of discrimination could arise." So far, more than 100 studies have been completed, at an estimated cost to taxpayers of $45 million.

As George R. LaNoue of the University of Maryland has shown, disparity studies have proved to be so unreliable that they have failed to convince any court to uphold a set-aside program. Many disparity studies are tendentious enterprises, more like bad opinion journalism than rigorous empirical analysis, in which advocacy groups are paid to conduct anonymous interviews and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

collect anecdotes to support the conclusion that minority groups and women in a particular area feel victimized by ethnic and gender slights. ("One MFE [Minority Female Enterprise] asserted that as a woman, the biggest obstacle she has had to overcome was that people did not take her seriously," reports an Ohio study. "She had to demand respect.") The prospect of the federal government spending millions of dollars to encourage citizens in every state to enumerate their racial and sexual discontents could ignite the most toxic elements in our civic culture.

The Clinton proposal promises to repeat many of the errors that, according to LaNoue, have doomed disparity studies in the past. Instead of comparing the numbers of qualified, willing and able businesses that have actually bid for particular contracts, the administration would rely on Census data that show the gross numbers of minority-owned firms in each particular market. But these numbers say nothing about a particular firm's ability to carry out a particular job at any point in time. And the administration defines industries and markets too broadly. Instead of examining minority firms' ability to perform "a particular service," to use O'Connor's words, the administration plans to lump a host of services, from roof-building to road-making, into the amorphous category of "construction," and create state-by-state "construction industry" goals. But court decisions make it clear that evidence of discrimination against Pakistani janitors can't be invoked to justify preferences for Hispanic guardrail makers.



To convince Justice O'Connor, the administration would have to undertake a breathtaking empirical task indeed: looking for evidence of discrimination against each group or sub-group included in the current set-aside program for each service that the federal government purchases in every state in the nation. But the Justice Department has decided not to do this. In practice, of course, there simply *isn't* evidence of systematic discrimination against many of the groups on the federal list. In the 1980s, bowing to successful lobbying, the Small Business Administration decided to add a slew of recent immigrant groups to the list, such as Asian Indians, Tongans and Indonesians. None of them has been here long enough to be the victim of historical discrimination.

The most dubious element of the administration's proposal is its plan to adjust its "goals" upward by calculating the number of potential minority firms that *would have* existed in a particular market, but for discrimination. This is a metaphysical, not an empirical, figure, and no state has convincingly calculated it. In a Texas case, for example, the state tried to suggest that low percentages of self-employed minorities, and high percentages of discrimination lawsuits filed, might indicate that minority business formation had been suppressed by discrimination. But the General Services Administration refused to accept the claim, conceding that business formation may be affected by cultural factors that have nothing to do with discrimination, such as some women's desire to have families, or the industriousness of certain recent immigrant groups, such as Koreans or Armenians.

In the end, the Clinton administration's effort to save the procurement set-asides is as strained as the University of Texas's defense of its own affirmative action program, and necessarily so. The real reason Congress created the set-asides in 1978, and the reason the administration defends them today, is because of a sense that it would be politically embarrassing to have a national procurement system that included very few companies owned by minorities. But avoiding embarrassment is not a public purpose that the Supreme Court has recognized as compelling. And, at this point, the costs of defending the federal set-asides have grown far more embarrassing than the costs of repealing them.

Perhaps a year from now the fate of affirmative action will look less precarious than it does today. Perhaps five justices will decide that diversity for its own sake really is an important state interest after all; perhaps President Clinton will have another term and another Supreme Court appointment; or perhaps the Council of Economic Advisers will uncover dramatic new evidence of discrimination against Kansan Aleuts. But, at this anxious, transitional moment, the hydraulic force of the *Adarand* decision is calling into question much of affirmative action as currently practiced. For better or worse, there is an unbreachable gap between the justifications for affirmative action that the Court is willing to accept and the real reasons the programs are adopted. The lawyers call this "bad tailoring," but it is hardly a cosmetic issue. It means that the most important transformation of racial politics since the civil rights era is being presided over by Sandra Day O'Connor. •

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

The Light Touch

Joy to the world. A talent is confirmed. Two years ago David O. Russell made his first film, *Spanking the Monkey*, which handled a difficult subject, incest, with finesse, even humor—a promising debut. The promise is kept. **Flirting with Disaster** (Miramax) is even better, a comedy that surfs from beginning to end on a wave of high spirits. The tone is young but not juvenile, sexy but not cynical, optimistic but not stupid. One of the most difficult jobs in filmmaking, considering the long and varied patches of time over which filming is done, is to sustain bounce, energy, *brio*. I can't remember anything since early Philippe de Broca (*The Joker*), over thirty years ago, that bubbles more consistently than Russell's new film.

What's it about? Well, the excuse for its action is the search of a young man, Ben Stiller, who was adopted as a baby, for his biological parents. (A slight mirror image of *Mighty Aphrodite*, which is mere gagster's cookery compared with Russell's soufflé.) He and his wife, Patricia Arquette, both entomologists at the New York Museum of Natural History, set out for California with their infant son, accompanied by a graduate student in psychology—female—who got the necessary information for them from an adoption agency and wants to observe the reunion for research purposes.

Not a spectacularly inviting premise, but the plot turns out to be less important to the whole than the plot of a Donizetti comic opera. It's an excuse, an armature, on which the creator can create what matters: the texture. From the very opening sequence, in which Stiller tells the psychologist, Téa Leoni, how he wonders whether every middle-aged person he passes might be his father or mother, we know we are being carried by deft and naughty fingers.

The search for Stiller's parents turns out to involve three locations. The first is southern California, at its most tawny and sun-besotted, the Circe of climates. The second is the snowy Midwest, involving truck drivers and federal agents. The third is the New Mexico desert, where the searchers meet a weird couple, Alan Alda and Lily Tomlin, and their ominous son, Glenn Fitzgerald. Russell seizes every chance along the way to laugh at contemporary vogues and pretenses, to revel in the quandaries brought about by sexual liberation. In essence, this is a sex comedy, which is remarkable considering that almost no sex is actually seen.

Russell's first success here is in his casting. Stiller, though he nods a bit too much as a sign that he knows what's going on and is considering his response, radiates friendliness and fun. Arquette provides just the right warm, young-mother presence and Leoni, with a perfect figure, is a perfect counterfoil. Mary Tyler Moore and George Segal are Stiller's adoptive parents, loving liberal Jewish New Yorkers who appear and reappear at the precise moments dictated by the rigors of farce. Alda and Tomlin supply their professional selves. Richard Jenkins and Josh Brolin are the two feds who keep revealing more and more of their complexities.

The cast-list alone suggests that Russell has zoomed high in Budget-land (although the cast of his $80,000 debut film was exceptionally good). The credits, involving every kind of technician and assistant, roll on for many minutes at the end as if to confirm Big Bucks. But, with the exception of one quite superfluous helicopter shot, Russell is not out to spend: he concentrates seriously on levity.

Let's not overlook the fact that he wrote his own script—and wrote it brightly. He might well have altered a scene in which Arquette sits on the toilet, and he could have left out some high-school jokes about the New Mexico family's name; but the dialogue is generally neat and sharp. Just one sample: when one of the feds begins to get high on LSD (I won't explain why), someone asks him how he feels. He says: "Vivid."

This is the second time, so early in the year, that a second film has confirmed the talent of an American director. Philip Haas, a quite different temperament, followed his haunting *Music of Chance* with the rich and disturbing *Angels and Insects*. Now Russell. Quite apart from the qualities of these two artists, it's cheering to see such a phenomenon in a film age that seems to bluntly oppose it.

Four years ago I reported here on a visit to the Institute Lumière in Lyons, a lovely cinémathèque, film museum and

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Fargo. *A comedy-drama of kidnapping and murder in snowy Minnesota. The two genres don't mix, but the comedy is comic—which, for the Coen brothers, is saying a lot. (Reviewed 3/25/96)* **Jack and Sarah.** *A young widowed London lawyer has to cope with his life, work and infant daughter. The acting gives the fluff sufficient body—Richard E. Grant, Judi Dench, Eileen Atkins and Ian McKellen do something more than help. (4/22/96)* **Land and Freedom.** *This time Ken Loach treats the Spanish Civil War. The political view is unclear, but the recreation is terrific. (4/1/96)* **The Star Maker.** *Sicily and Sicilians and cinema, by Giuseppe Tornatore, who showed in* Cinema Paradiso *that he loves all three. The story doesn't come to much, but the look and sound of it are enrapturing. (4/15/96)*—**SK**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

film library in the very villa where the Lumière brothers lived and worked. Now the institute is, so to speak, visiting America.

The first film ever made, according to some historians, was done by the Lumières on March 19, 1895—a shot of workers leaving the brothers' photographic factory at the end of the day. (In fact the one-minute film was shot three times, with the workers repeating their exit, which gives the term "documentary" an ambiguous meaning at its birth.) To celebrate the centennial, the institute took that film and some eight others, from the thousand or so that the brothers produced, and prepared a fifty-minute assemblage. **The First Picture Show**, as it's called, had its American premiere at the Walter Reade Theater in New York in March of this year. Present were Bertrand Tavernier, filmmaker *extraordinaire*, who is president of the institute, and Thierry Frémaux, artistic director of the institute; they introduced and commented on the film. It will be toured to a number of American cities, and Tavernier and Frémaux plan to accompany it. Watch for local announcements.

All of the films are about one minute long or less, and a few of them were on the first bill that the Lumières presented in Paris in December 1895—the factory piece, *L'Arroseur arrosé*, *Le gouter de bébé*, and others—and are now world-famous. The entire assemblage is fascinating. The nine sections are arranged by topic, including "The French at Work," which by being exactly what it says it is—visual records of haymaking and laundering and so on—is a monument to labor. My two other favorite sections were very short travelogues, done or commissioned by the Lumières, ranging from Dublin firemen to an Indo-China (Vietnam) opium den and "Gags and Comedies," the one section of fiction films.

Throughout the press screening, Tavernier kept remarking on the precocious virtues of the cinematography. The Lumières, he said, always seemed to know exactly where to place the camera; showed a refined sense of perspective; composed frames beautifully. And, I thought, were more influential than I had imagined. One pillow fight by children, for instance, seemed to prefigure *Zéro de Conduite*.

Beyond these matters and beyond the wonder at the speed with which film developed from its relatively recent birth, this Lumière assemblage showed how much was perceived about filmmaking right from the start. And there is something else, something mysterious that is often true of old photographs and is intensified in old "documentaries": a soft, lovely melancholy. •

Robert Brustein on Theater

The New Bohemians

The American theater chases after a new musical sensation with all the messianic fervor of a religious sect pursuing redemption. And when the composer/librettist dies the day before his show begins previews, we have all the conditions required for cultural myth-making—a martyred redeemer, a new gospel, hordes of passionate young believers and canonization by *The New York Times*, which devoted virtually all the theater columns of a recent Arts and Leisure section to **Rent**, the "rock opera for our time."

Jonathan Larson's premature death at the age of 35 from an aortic aneurism was a misfortune from many points of view. He was a young man on the brink of a strong career who did not live to enjoy the early fruits of his talents, a promising artist who would undoubtedly have gone on to write much more finished works. I hope it will not be construed as coldhearted when I say that his death was also a sad day for contemporary criticism, being another instance of how it can be hobbled by extra-artistic considerations.

Rent (now playing at the New York Theatre Workshop before it moves to Broadway) is an updated version of *La Bohème*, substituting the multicultural denizens of New York's East Village for Puccini's Latin Quarter Bohemians. It is good-natured, fully energized, theatrically knowing and occasionally witty. It is also badly manufactured, vaguely manipulative, drenched in self-pity and sentimental in a way that makes Puccini and his librettists (Illica and Giacosa) look like cynics.

Rent is being advertised as "*Hair* for the '90s," and there are indeed certain similarities between the two musicals. Both idealize their socially marginal

SOUTHAMPTON COLLEGE
OF
LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY

takes great pleasure in announcing the appointment of

ROGER ROSENBLATT
as
UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR OF WRITING

For information about the English and Writing Program at Southampton College, contact the Admissions Office, Southampton College, Southampton, NY 11968.

Phone: (516) 287-8200 Fax: (516) 283-4081
E-mail: admissions@sand.liunet.edu

LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY

Prostate Cancer
If you or a friend or family member are facing prostate cancer, you do have options. For FREE information call Theragenics Cancer Information Center,
1-800-458-4372

PUBLISH YOUR BOOK
At A Price You Can Afford!
$197 EACH Size: 5½"x 8½", 64 pgs, 500 copies, 2-color cvr. Negs, Proofs, Perf Bd.
From $529. Write for Price List.
800-277-8960 PROFESSIONAL PRESS
P.O. Box 3581 • Chapel Hill, NC 27515-3581

AUDIO BOOKS
• Rentals by mail
• All Unabridged
• Huge Selection
• 100% Guarantee
BLACKSTONE AUDIO BOOKS
Dept. NE • P.O. Box 969 • Ashland OR 97520
For a FREE Catalogue, Write or Call:
1-800-729-2665

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

characters, both are poorly constructed, and both fail to penetrate very deeply beneath a colorful and exotic surface. Larson was a sophisticated librettist, if a somewhat sloppy architect (there is twice as much incident in his brief second act as in the much longer section that precedes it). But his score for *Rent* struck me as the musical equivalent of wallpaper, the rock version of elevator music ("tame and second hand," as Bernard Holland wrote in the only *Times* dissent). Compared to Galt McDermott's exhilarating compositions for *Hair*, Larson's songs—except for the moving "Another Day"—show little lyric genius. Their impact derives less from intrinsic inspiration than from extrinsic amplification. Whenever the show begins to flag, the appealing cast lines up downstage to holler into microphones.

The cast, in fact, is highly amplified throughout the entire evening, often leaving us in bewilderment over whose lips are issuing the sounds. The principals wear head mikes, which not only makes them look like telephone operators but makes any physical contact between them (such as a hug or a kiss) sound more like a scrape. *Rent* has a lot to say about the need for human communication, but nothing very human is allowed to emerge from all this acoustical racket. "You're living in America where it's like the Twilight Zone," notes one character, while another (cribbing from Philip Roth) asks, "How do you document real life when real life is getting more like fiction every day?" What isn't probed is how these people also contribute to a sense of the American unreality, especially when they are so superficially examined.

Although warm-hearted, Larson's book is basically superficial and unconvincing. In this piggyback *Bohème*, the painter Marcello becomes Mark, a documentary filmmaker; Rudolfo the poet turns into Roger, a rock composer; Colline the philosopher emerges as Tom Collins, a black anarchist expelled from MIT for his work on "actual reality"; and Schaunard, the musician, metamorphoses into Angel, a black sculptor by profession and transvestite by disposition. As for the women, Musetta evolves into a bisexual rock singer named Maureen who has left Mark for Joanne (Puccini's Alcindoro transformed into a black lawyer from Harvard), while Mimi, the mignonette, has turned into Mimi Marquez, a Latino strip dancer and heroin user (when she enters Roger's apartment with frozen hands, carrying a candle, she's looking for her stash).

The background for all this interracial, intersexual character grunge is a rent strike. Blacks, Latinos and whites alike, whether gay, bisexual or straight, all stand in common opposition to the uptight Benjamin Coffin III, who, though also black, is, like his Puccini prototype Benoit, a grasping landlord and rent gouger. What they protest is his hard-heartedness toward the homeless ("Do you really want a neighborhood where people piss on your stoop every night?") and his desire to gentrify the surroundings ("This is Calcutta. Bohemia's dead").

Aside from this easy mark, and similar simplistic oppositions, what virtually all these people have in common is AIDS (an analogy for Mimi's tuberculosis in *La Bohème*). Some have contracted the disease from sexual activity, some from drug use, but in *Rent* it seems to be an East Village epidemic. During an AZT break, the entire cast pops pills. Most of them are dying. Angel, minus his wig and connected to an IV, is provided with a protracted death scene, after which Mimi memorializes him as "so much more original than any of us." (Following Kushner's *Angels in America*, Phyllis Nagy's *Weldon Rising*, the PBS documentary *The Time of Our Dying* and other such theatrical artifacts, it is doubtful how "original" black drag queens really are any more.)

The death of Angel (the angel of death?) sets the stage for Mimi's demise. She and Roger have finally consummated their love after discovering they are both HIV positive and therefore can't contaminate each other. Still, Roger decides to leave for Santa Fe to write one great song before he dies. Upon his return, he learns that Mimi has been living on the street, in deteriorating health. Maureen carries the dying girl into Roger's apartment, and all the comrades gather round for the obligatory death scene. Roger declares his love in song ("Who do you think you are, leaving me alone with my guitar"), Mimi falls back on the couch, and the concluding strains of *La Bohème*—the most powerful music of the evening—swell up over the sobs and groans.

Fear not. Unlike bel canto opera, American musicals allow resurrections and require happy endings. Mimi awakes. Her "fever has broken." Love has triumphed over immune deficiency. And the show concludes with the lovers in each other's arms, as movie memories are projected onto an upstage screen.

We don't ask our musicals to be like real life unless they pretend to be: *Rent* is offered to us as an authentic East Village *tranche de vie*. This pretense makes the final Puccini musical quotation seem cheap and the ending sentimental. George Meredith once defined the sentimentalist as "He who would enjoy without incurring the immense debtorship for the thing done." He accurately describes the emotions forced upon the audience in *Rent*: a ghastly disease is exploited for mawkish purposes.

Michael Greif's highly charged production employs a host of gifted young performers: Daphne Rubin-Vega as a dejected Mimi in skin-tight Spandex pants; Adam Pascal as the rock-and-rolling Roger; Anthony Rapp as the camera-toting Mark; Wilson Jermaine Heredia as the transvestite sculptor Angel; Idina Menzel (a Sandra Bernhard look-alike) as the sexually ambivalent Maureen; and Taye Diggs, Fredi Walker and Jesse L. Martin in other roles. The energy of the entire cast is prodigious. I hope that energy can be sustained over what promises to be a long Broadway run.

Larson has been hailed for creating the downtown equivalent of Bohemian life. I fear he has only created another fashion. Bohemia used to be celebrated not just for flamboyant life-styles but also for artistic innovation. Many Bohemian artists (Ibsen, Manet) dressed like burghers and lived exemplary lives. It was Flaubert who famously said that he was peaceful and conservative in his life in order to be violent and radical in his work. Alas, Larson's New Age Bohemians display nothing but their life-styles. As for their art, it's just a little daunting to note that most of them have no greater ambition than to dominate the rock charts.

I left *Rent* feeling like a Thurber character, the one who feared that electricity was escaping all over the room. I found an antidote in Julie Taymor's exhilarating staging of Carlo Gozzi's **The Green Bird** (produced by the Theatre for a New Audience in the splendidly refurbished New Victory Theater). There the electricity was contained, focused and channeled. With the aid of Christine Jones's stunning set and Constance Hoffman's splendiferous costumes, Taymor has invested enough visual imagination in this production to satisfy a dozen such evenings, and her actors have responded with bravura performances of dazzling wit and style. Gozzi mixes Italian *commedia dell 'arte* characters with Asian theatrical conventions. Taymor adds touches of Balinese movement and Indonesian mask work, along with American vaudeville and burlesque.

Like most of Gozzi's fairy tales, the story of *The Green Bird* looks silly on the page, revolving as it does around talking stone heads, statues that come to life and singing apples that (like the citrus fruit in *The Love of Three Oranges*) help to resolve the plot. Here the story serves largely as scaffolding for low comedy, magical transformations and unexpected conjunctions. Using half masks

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and nose masks, along with fantastic costumes, puppets and floats, Taymor creates a grand show partly acted, partly mimed, partly sung and partly danced (to the accompaniment of Elliot Goldenthal's shimmering music).

Albert Bermel's adaptation has a delightful contemporary ring to it, but the evening's real triumph is the performance. While full of admiration in the past for Taymor's visual genius, I have not hitherto been much impressed by her work with actors. *The Green Bird* is a great advance in this regard. Derek Smith as Tartaglia the King is especially winning. Decked out in a white suit, red shoes and a pair of protruding ears, he presents a mournful picture of a regent with mood swings, calling for his "King thing" (his crown) and lamenting that "It's as easy to make a true friend as it is to wipe your ass with a rose." Andrew Weems is also highly amusing as Pantalone, the King's adviser, which he plays in a bowler hat with a baroque Italian accent. And he is simply brilliant playing a series of beauticians, particularly as a dressmaker advising Barberina on her wardrobe and accessories ("Trust me, darling, take the gold").

Priscilla Shanks as Tartagliona, the King's mother, is an ancient crone who hates her grandchildren and despises her son ("My only disgrace was giving birth to Dumbo"). With an upward sweep of hair and long hanging breasts with tassels on them, she looks like a bad-tempered centipede on a rampage. Didi Conn and Ned Eisenberg are appealing as Smeraldina and Truffaldino, two sausage vendors who ply their trade off an enormous pig, segmented to display the ham, the bacon and the pork chops. And Erico Villanueva has a showstopping number as "Dancing Water," adding circus acrobatics to the other popular forms employed in the production.

Although they used the same *commedia* characters, Gozzi was the very antithesis of his contemporary rival Goldoni—aristocratic, fantastical and imaginative where Goldoni was democratic, bourgeois and realistic. This conflict between fantasy and realism in the theater (similar to the later argument between Meyerhold and Stanislavski) established the terms for a theatrical opposition that persists to this day. Julie Taymor—along with her early Gozzi collaborator, Andrei Serban—seems ideally equipped to advance the inventive, theatrical and fanciful side of the equation. •

Java Jive

By Clifford Geertz

Footsteps
by Pramoedya Ananta Toer
translated by Max Lane

(William Morrow, 474 pp., $23)

House of Glass
by Pramoedya Ananta Toer
translated by Max Lane

(William Morrow, 352 pp., $25)

The displacement of political engagement toward literature in authoritarian countries—those with undeveloped, stultified or forcibly shrunken civil societies—is a commonplace. There is nothing like banning parties, eviscerating representative institutions, muzzling the press, incarcerating dissenters, appointing soldiers to ministries of justice and education, and ideologizing popular culture for turning the imaginative writer into a power. Solzhenitsyn and Havel, Ngugi and Solinka, even the fugitive Rushdie, the reticent Mahfuz, or the exported Fugard, make generals, presidents, ayatollahs and party chiefs nervous in a way that their colleagues in less constrained settings seldom attain. There is usually a price for this, and it is often, as the fate of Ken Saro-Wiwa recently reminded us, a heavy one. But that, too, seems to contribute to the public force of the writer.

When this happens, when a novelist or a playwright or a poet takes on political significance as a player in the game—as someone whom the authorities have somehow to deal with, to bring into line, to isolate, to appease, or to silence—critical judgment is forced in uncomfortable directions. Such writers become emblematic, signs as such. Their lives are rivals to their work, which may come, as a result, to seem almost an ancillary matter, the occasion of their significance rather than the substance of it. Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Indonesia's most famous writer and the country's perpetual candidate for the Nobel Prize (his 1983 curriculum vitae already lists him as a "nominee," whatever that means, and there is something of an international lobby promoting his cause), is surely a case in point. His career has been as political as it has been literary, a matter as much of insurgencies and prisons as of novels, translations, essays in criticism and short stories.

Not that there hasn't been a prodigious flow of those. His first major works, two novels and a collection of short stories, were written while he was locked up by the Dutch between 1947 and 1949, during Indonesia's war for independence. During the Sukarno period, a time of rising ideological passion that ended with the failed coup, the destruction of the Indonesian Communist Party and the popular massacres of 1965, he produced no less than eight novels, three collections of short stories, three historical-cum-literary studies (*Socialist Realism and Indonesian Literature, The Intellectual Community in the Third World, The Chinese in Indonesia*) and fifteen translations (Steinbeck, Tolstoi, Sholokhov, Gorki, Pascal). After Suharto came to power, he was again imprisoned, this time for fourteen years, and passed the time assembling—the verb is exact—the enormous four-volume historical novel sometimes called *The Buru Quartet*, after the penal colony in which it was composed, on which his fame will surely rest. For fifty years, Pramoedya (the appropriate form of reference for him), who is now 71, has been committed to his trade.

The theme of all his work—aside from the translations and the critical work, which seem to have been mostly ideological gestures—has been the same: the moral dislocations brought into being by the rise, the triumph and (to his mind) the betrayal of Indonesian nationalism. Since his participation, in his early 20s, in the radical and romantic literary movement, the so-called "Generation of '45," that revolted against the combination of literary conventionalism and spiritual earnestness that had grown up in the closing days of colonial rule, Pramoedya has been the chronicler of what he once referred to as the "victim[s] of patriotism and inadequate leadership." His stories

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are stories of the rages and the desolations of an aborted revolution.

Pramoedya's life has followed the same course, as though he were composing his oeuvre and his career as a single effort, to the point where his works seem intensely autobiographical, even when, as in the tetralogy, they are set in a period other than his own, about predicaments other than his own, with characters at some distance from his own. Born in eastern Java in 1925, the son of a schoolteacher who left a comfortable position in a Dutch "native" school to become an ill-paid headmaster in a nationalist "free" school and a mother from a strongly Islamic family, he left home in his teens during the occupation of Indonesia by the Japanese, working for a time for Domei, their press agency, in Jakarta. When the revolution broke out in August, 1945, he joined a youthful guerrilla group which harassed the British re-occupation forces around the capital.

Rather than accept incorporation into the rationalized army of the Sukarno-Hatta Republic—the formation of which set professional Dutch and Japanese soldiers against populist irregulars intent on keeping the cause pure and the struggle unremitting—Pramoedya wandered about revolutionary Java, a scene of intimate treacheries and private retributions, for some months. By the time the Dutch launched the first of their two military campaigns to retake the country, he had gone reluctantly to work for the new government's radio station, "The Voice of Free Indonesia," and he was arrested, tortured, imprisoned and, apparently a hard case, released only at the very end of Dutch rule in late 1949.

During the Sukarno regime, Pramoedya drifted steadily leftward as the regime itself did, sharing first in its popularity and then in its fate. Whether or not he was ever formally a member of the Indonesian Communist Party, he became increasingly identified with it in the public mind, and apparently in his own mind, as its power grew. He journeyed to Beijing and returned an enthusiast. He became the cultural editor of an influential left-wing newspaper, an editorial adviser to the Czech cultural journal *Orient*, and editor for Indonesian literature for *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia*. Most fatefully, he emerged in 1958 as the leading figure in LEKRA, or the Institute of People's Culture, the Party apparatus which, in the early 1960s, came to dominate literary and artistic life in Indonesia.

There is much debate about what Pramoedya did or did not do in this period. He has been accused of, and has denied, an involvement in book burning; but it is a matter of record that, amid the increasing hysteria of the Party's massive, near-miss surge toward power (LEKRA alone claimed a half million members), he called for "smashing," "crushing," "devouring" and "eliminating" non-communist writers, inveighed against the translation of *Doctor Zhivago* into Indonesian, and generally engaged in what one Indonesian news magazine recently called "terror mental." When, in 1963, twenty-three of Indonesia's leading writers and painters, most of them former compatriots of his in the battle of "the Generation of '45" against late colonial gentility, published a manifesto—a rather anodyne document, actually ("we do not regard any one sector of culture as superior to any other. All [should] work together . . . to the best of their ability")—Pramoedya led a fierce assault against them. This resulted in the suppression of their work, their journals, and, in 1964, the official prohibition by Sukarno of their movement altogether. "Uniformity," as A. Teuuw, the Dutch historian of modern Indonesian literature, mordantly remarks, "had been achieved."

Pramoedya was riding high. He was, for the moment, Indonesia's Zhdanov. But only for the moment: the reversal of fortune, when it came, was swift and total. After the failure of the coup and the accession of Suharto in October 1965, he was dragged from his house amid a hail of stones and the cries of an angry mob. His library and his papers were burned; he was passed through a number of prison camps and again tortured; and finally, along with perhaps 10,000 other "special cases," and still untried in a public court, he was transported to Buru, a small island in the Moluccas. It was not until the end of 1979 that he was released, and then into city arrest in Jakarta.

The first decade or so in this south sea gulag was extraordinarily brutal; many prisoners perished from beatings and starvation. Yet the last two or three years, though grim enough, saw something of a relaxation. Freed suddenly from manual labor, provided with writing materials, and permitted a small study in his barracks, Pramoedya turned from reciting his tale piecemeal to other prisoners to writing, at what seems to have been a feverish pace (the whole is dated "spoken 1973, written 1975"), the 1,500-page tetralogy, of which *Footsteps*—a better rendering would have been *Footprints*—is the third volume and *House of Glass* the fourth. The first two, *This Earth of Mankind* and *Child of All Nations*, appeared in English in 1982 and 1993.

Western critics have been generally at a loss to convey the peculiarly didactic and reiterative quality of Pramoedya's writing in general, and of the tetralogy in particular—its relentless succession of desperately earnest conversations between typified characters in schematized scenes. So they have reached, in worried confusion, for all sorts of Western analogues: Solzhenitsyn, Steinbeck, James Baldwin, Dashiell Hammett, Dickens, Conrad, Nadine Gordimer, Camus, Dostoyevsky, and (the only one with very much to be said for it) a television miniseries. It is, in fact, a narrative, or a series of narratives, that consists almost entirely of talking heads explaining and re-explaining themselves to one another over a thirty-year period of political upheaval, almost all of which takes place offstage as summarily reported event—all of which fits oral patterns of literature and the memory devices that sustain them a good deal better than it does the plots and subplots of the realistic novel. The told tale, later transcribed, moves in a different way than a tale that has been constructed from the start as a written text. For the reader used to crises and conclusions, to peripeties of character, and to the seaward flow of cause and consequence, it may seem hardly to move at all.

What Pramoedya has produced in *The Buru Quartet* is not, or anyway not primarily, a saga, though it traces the career of a Dutch-educated Javanese aristocrat, oppositional journalist, and pioneer nationalist (a figure based on an actual personage, never that well-known and now largely forgotten) from the end of the nineteenth century through the First World War. It is not a psychological portrait, though the protagonist's self-questionings and self-justifications are as endless as they are arch and formulaic. Nor is it even a moral tale, though the good guys and the bad guys are very clearly marked. It is a sociological tableau: a drawn, re-drawn and re-drawn-again depiction of a multi-religious, multi-linguistic, multi-racial, multi-cultural society that, challenged to change its nature, merely rearranges its parts.

Pramoedya's hero is called Minke, which, as he says, may or may not mean "monkey," and therefore may or may not suggest the Ramayana, Hanuman, and the simian army that recaptures Sita from the demon king and restores the realm to Rama. The name is given him by a racist schoolmaster, but its Javanese resonances, upon which the novel continuously plays, are rather more complex. Minke is Indonesian nationalism personified. What happens to him happened to it, and to Pramoedya.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The first volume, *This Earth of Mankind*, is set in turn-of-the-century Surabaya, Indonesia's Hamburg or Marseilles, a polyglot, disorderly passage port where the exiled, the radical and the imaginatively violent tend to wash up. The book immediately plunges Minke—he is in his teens, "the age of a corn plant," and has come there from his village to study in a Dutch school and make himself modern—into an extraordinary swirl of human types. There is his "Indo," that is, Eurasian, schoolmate ("He was taller than me. In his body ran some Native blood. Who knows how many drops or clots"), a violent thug who will become his pursuer throughout his life. ("He thought he knew my weakness. I had no European blood in my body.") There is the immensely wealthy "Pure Blood" Dutch businessman, into whose household, "a castle of puzzles," the thug introduces Minke. There is the businessman's elegant and accomplished Javanese concubine ("Should I offer my hand as to a European woman, or should I treat her as Native woman and ignore her?") who, despised alike by Dutch and indigenes, becomes his protectoress and confidante. (She will return in the final volume after his death, looking for him like a lost son.) There is the beautiful "Mixed Blood" daughter of these two, "white skinned, refined, European face, hair and eyes of a Native," whom he marries and who soon declines and dies in Holland, where he has been forbidden by the colonial government to follow her. There is her brother ("He looked European, except he had brown skin") who is later suspected of murdering the father.

And so it goes. Through the subsequent three volumes, the types pile up, talking their way through allegorized history. A Chinese brothel keeper; a peg-leg French doctor; various sorts of Dutchmen variously placed; and various sorts of Javanese, including his father, a native district chief in the colonial bureaucracy, full of propriety and caution; his steadfast mother, with whom he seems to be always exchanging apologies; his village-educated nationalist cronies, brave, unspoiled and dog-loyal. We get a literary Haji, a Eurasian, a former sailor and recent convert to Islam, who publishes anonymously a novel exposing life on a sugar plantation and departs for Jeddah. We get a Chinese agitator for the Kuomintang who is killed by the secret societies, a wealthy Arab cloth trader with Turkish-educated sons, and, at one giddy point, the Governor General of the East Indies, a hardened soldier who holds palace soirées on preparing natives for the modern age. And, last but not least, we get the petty bourgeois colonial policeman, a Catholic Christian "Native" from the northern Celebes who studied in France and dreams helplessly of returning there. He brings about Minke's arrest and transportation, and it is in his voice, a ventriloquized version of Minke's own, that the last volume is told.

After the expiration of his delicate Eurasian beauty, Minke marries a ferocious Chinese nationalist, born in Shanghai and raised in a Catholic convent. ("[The] cultural barriers between us . . . had been magically made to vanish. . . . [We] had come out of the same factory called the modern age.") When she too soon wastes away and dies, he marries an exotic, dark-skinned Princess from the extreme Melanesian east of Indonesia. ("She was tall and slender and her skin was an attractive ebony color. . . . Perhaps she had Portuguese blood.") Along the way he manages as well to get himself seduced by the pretty French wife of his repulsive Eurasian lawyer. ("Whose child was now growing in Mir's womb? . . . Who would it look like? Me, Mir, or Hendrik? Would it be Native, Eurasian, or White?") "The Indies," he says, the Indies Pramoedya has placed him in, "is just an untamed jungle and I am just one of its million monkeys."

Minke's attempt—a quixotic, confused, or, since history finally is on his side, merely premature attempt—to tame the jungle and replace its million monkeys with a modern, self-propelling, organized national community is the subject of *Footsteps*, the axial novel in the series and the one that is most transparently based on Pramoedya's own struggles. Set in Batavia, the colonial capital ("Not as busy as Surabaya. And so clean") during the first two decades of the century, when the nationalist movement emerged for the first time as a visible public force, the book traces, though again largely through set-piece conversations, his meteoric career as a journalist, agitator, organizer, conspirator and ideologue. Beginning in exultant promise ("Into the universe of Betawi I go—into the universe of the twentieth century. . . . I am here . . . to do great things . . . to free [humanity] from the unnecessary ties of custom, blood—even from the land . . ."), it concludes, barely a dozen years later, in treachery, defeat and exile. "All that I have built has been destroyed . . . [I have been] pierced from the front and stabbed . . . from behind. . . . I will be leaving Java. . . . Things will go hard for me now. I have always been hard with the world."

In the end, with the crushing of radical nationalism after the First World War, and their leaders—Sukarno, Hatta, Sjahrir—sent off to their own Devil's Islands, the

• *The* Argonaut™ Fountain Pen *comes with dual ink supply—piston pump and ink cartridges. Two cartridges are included with the pen.*

• *The 2-tone German-made nib of the* Argonaut™ *is 18-kt. gold-plated, with a silk-smooth iridium tip.*

Perfection andexquisite luxury at an incredible price...

Argonaut™ Fountain Pen 18-kt. Gold-Plated only $99*

***But read this ad for an even better deal!**

The *Argonaut™ Fountain Pen* conveys, at first glance, its aura of exquisite luxury and style. It is heavily plated in 18-kt. gold, an absolute delight to the eye in its brilliance and sparkle; and a pleasure to the hand in its heft and feel and its beautiful and effortless writing. The German-made nib of the *Argonaut™ Fountain Pen* is also 18 kt. gold-plated; it is tipped by an iridium point that should give you years and years of silk-smooth writing.

You may well wonder what the "catch" is since you have seen heavy advertising on virtually identical ("big name") gold-plated fountain pens for $350 or more. If there is a "catch" it is that in buying from us you avoid two or three layers of middlemen. These pens are made to our exclusive and exacting specifications. We import them in large quantities and sell them directly to you at the astonishing price of just $99. But we have an even better deal: ***Buy two for just $198 and we'll send you a third one, with our compliments—absolutely FREE!*** Enter a whole new world of perfection, luxury and enjoyment. Order your *Argonaut™ Fountain Pen(s)* today.

FOR FASTEST SERVICE, ORDER
TOLL FREE (800) 797-7367
24 Hours a Day, 7 Days a Week.

For Customer Service and for wholesale/premium quantity orders, please call 415-543-6675.

Please give order **#1045C219** for Argonaut Fountain Pen(s). We need daytime phone # for all orders. Add $4.95 standard shipping/insurance charge (plus sales tax for California delivery). You have 30-day return and one-year warranty. We do not refund shipping charges.

since 1967
haverhills®
185 Berry Street, San Francisco, CA 94107

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

monkeys remain an undisciplined, chattering throng, powerless and divided. His newspaper long closed by the authorities, his nationalist organization passed into careerist, collaborationist hands, his wife disappeared as though she had never existed, Minke is released from prison and returned to Java. Unbowed, he refuses to sign a document promising abstention from politics—"[Do] you want me to sign my own death sentence without there having been any trial, just as I was sentenced to exile without any trial?" Apparently poisoned by yet another brutal Eurasian, he soon dies, "leaving behind in this world only the imprints of his footsteps."

Minke's story may be over, but Pramoedya continues to leave footprints. He has been under city arrest in Jakarta, forbidden to travel or to make public appearances. His books are banned in Indonesia. Students have been jailed for attempting to distribute them, though they usually circulate for a while before disappearing, and in neighboring Malaysia they are required reading in the schools. His international audience is immense: his publishers claim a million people in twenty languages. Pramoedya savages the Suharto government at every opportunity. "It is I who should give them amnesty," he told reporters from *The Economist* when they came round recently to see if he was mellowing. He has just edited the memoirs—they were also immediately banned—of a Chinese minister in Sukarno's last cabinet, who refers to "The Smiling General" as "blunt" and "cruel."

But all that, by now, is standard on the Jakarta scene: Hanuman at work. It was the decision by a committee in Manila last summer to give him the Ramon Magsaysay Prize that thrust Pramoedya back into his old role of cultural lightning rod—that made him, his career and his work the focus once again of a deep and divisive public debate. Ramon Magsaysay, the reformist president of the Philippines in the mid-1950s, put down the communist-led Huk rebellion, warred on corruption, and sought to improve the condition of the Philippine poor. He remains in many circles in Southeast Asia an exemplary, almost sainted figure, especially in the light of what followed him. After his death a foundation was set up, in large part with American money, to award a prize in his name to Asian journalists, writers and artists who represented the ideals—democracy, freedom and peaceful progress—for which he is held to have stood. And the notion of the people in Manila that Pramoedya, the ex-commissar, was such a figure, broke upon the Indonesian intellectual community like a return of the repressed.

Twenty-six of the country's most prominent artists and writers, erstwhile opponents of Sukarno and objects of Pramoedya's LEKRA assaults, immediately protested. About as many, most of them also ex-targets of his, and all of them critics of Suharto, protested the protest. A former winner of the prize—a passionate anti-Sukarno and anti-Communist journalist who won it nearly forty years ago, when times were different—returned it to Manila. A leading poet, who remembered mass meetings at which he and his friends had been cast into outer darkness as counter-revolutionaries, suggested that Pramoedya might deserve the Lenin Prize, the Nobel Prize, the Pulitzer Prize, or even the Literary Prize of the Jakarta Arts Council that the poet himself had won, but not a prize named for Magsaysay, and that the Foundation had thrown mud upon its own principles.

A former anti-Sukarno youth leader, now a sociologist, agreed that Pramoedya's sins should not be forgotten, but insisted that he deserved the prize as Indonesia's finest writer; and in recognizing that fact, and accepting it, those who had fought the culture of denunciation that Pramoedya once represented could demonstrate that it had been truly overcome. Another such youth leader and later editor of the country's leading news magazine, now himself in the courts struggling to overturn a ban put on his magazine by the Suharto government, said that "Pramoedya has already been imprisoned for thirteen years in a prison colony without trial, and has been unable to speak in public for thirty years. Isn't that too much? Isn't that enough?"

Apparently it was neither: Pramoedya was forbidden to go to Manila to collect his prize. His wife picked it up for him. Meanwhile the writer sits in Jakarta, writing (most recently, one hears, a thoroughly intransigent, in-your-face diary of his Buru years) and trying to outwait history and Suharto. The general is three years older than the writer, and he seems to be gearing up to run for another five-year term in 1998. The country has changed enormously since both began their careers a half century ago, but the structure of feeling changes, apparently, more slowly than the production system or the transport network. A voice of and from the past, Pramoedya still seems capable of disturbing the present, however separated he has become from its workings. "The writer continues to develop," he once wrote, "but not his writing."

CLIFFORD GEERTZ is the author most recently of *After the Fact: Two Countries, Four Decades, One Anthropologist* (Harvard University Press).

Brother Act

BY JIM SLEEPER

Go and Tell Pharaoh: The Autobiography of the Reverend Al Sharpton by Al Sharpton and Anthony Walton

(Doubleday, 276 pp., $23.95)

To explain why he has written his autobiography now, at 41, the Reverend Al Sharpton cites as a "defining episode" his stabbing by a white man on January 12, 1991, as he prepared to lead a march in Brooklyn's Bensonhurst section, where a black youth had been murdered by local whites.

> I realized, all of a sudden, I could die doing the work I was doing. I began to question how I wanted to be remembered. I was getting older. I was thirty-eight, not twenty-eight. [Actually, he was 36; he was born on October 3, 1954.] I was a husband and a father.... After I was stabbed, I decided to try to begin acting out of resolve, out of an overall plan.... I realized that running around from problem to problem, chasing phone call after phone call, would never move society.... As my children grow older, I've become more and more sensitive to how they see me ... and, if the truth be told, few were asking; the media seemed to enjoy portraying me as a substanceless gadfly.

If the truth be told, three months before the stabbing, Sharpton asked this member of the media to meet him at Junior's Restaurant in Brooklyn, where he told me, over pastrami and eggs, "I'm 36 now, with two little girls starting school. I don't think being on the 6 o'clock news every night accomplishes much anymore. I'm looking for new directions." His defining episode, he was saying then, was that "I've been thinking

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a lot about what you wrote about me." Actually, he was conducting one of many periodic campaigns to ingratiate himself with journalists and political figures in the aftermath of another self-inflicted disgrace, this time his histrionics over the Tawana Brawley and Central Park jogger cases.

Sharpton was also making one of many apparently sincere efforts to remake himself, to become a more credible tribune of blacks who feel shortchanged by the American Dream. *Go and Tell Pharaoh* is the latest such effort, prompted this time by his political eclipse under a surprisingly deft Mayor Rudolph Giuliani; by his obsequious embraces of Louis Farrakhan; and by his rhetorical goosing of a separatist paranoia that issued in last December's massacre of eight people in an assault on a Jewish-owned store in Harlem. Like Sharpton's other rehabilitation efforts, such as his run for the Democratic nomination to oppose Senator Alfonse D'Amato in 1992, this book is at times affecting, but mainly as an expression of the black haplessness and yearning upon which he floats. *Go and Tell Pharaoh* will only set up the credulous for more disappointment.

The ranks of the credulous, or the white credulous, have thinned, anyway, and the book's greatest merit is that inadvertently it helps us to understand why. Sharpton's problem isn't so much that he could die doing his work as an impresario of racial street theater; it's that such work is drying up, as the ground of racial discourse shifts under our feet. One hears more talk now about small business development and home ownership than about reenacting ancient hurts to dramatize racism. This is not because blacks think racism has declined, but because it has become harder to capitalize on black rage as Sharpton did during the past ten years. Hence the book mainly recycles old rationalizations and shibboleths.

For all that, it is the testament of a man who is neither a buffoon, as some would have it, nor a tragic hero, as some well-wishers think, but an American folkloric figure, a trickster, a clever practitioner of the politics of promiscuity. His only real political center is blackness, a center which the rest of the world imposes, in part, but which he embraces and embellishes out of weakness as much as love. Isn't "the Reverend" centered in Christianity, too? Well, sort of. He keeps circling back to it, preaching every Sunday in one church or another; calling himself a "devout Pentecostal" in this book; and guarding his wife and two daughters closely. Yet he's often around when terribly un-Christian things are happening, especially in tandem with his stagy remonstrances with phantom "pharaohs."

Sharpton's co-author, Anthony Walton, is in on the game. He was one of the first journalists to officiate at a Sharpton rehabilitation years ago, in a profile for the now-defunct *Seven Days* that managed to make Sharpton almost endearing just when the Brawley case had made most people think the worst. But the book is Sharpton, through and through, filled with his typical rhetorical questions, apologetics for outrageous behavior and beguiling introspections. Walton has added some narrative and intellectual coherence and dropped in a few felicitous phrases, but this collaboration cannot have been wrenching for either man.

Walton has his own knack for these things. His book, *Mississippi*, which was published in February, recounts his recent poignant reckonings with his parents' experiences of unrelenting racism as he visited the state they'd left before he was born. "When I went to Mississippi, I was an American innocent," he writes, "happily suffering the historical amnesia" of our national dream as a child of an integrated Chicago suburb who'd dated white girls and faced few problems weightier, he says, than choosing between cappuccino and espresso after dinner. Actually, as David Garrow noted in *Newsday*, Walton had already announced his loss of innocence in 1989, in an essay called "Willie Horton and Me," for *The New York Times* Sunday magazine. There, he wrote that the Horton commercials had made him and his black friends feel "suckered" by an American Dream that they considered "a hoax" because it so casually stigmatized them. The Horton essay and his early Sharpton profile suggest that Walton no more went to Mississippi in the 1990s an "innocent" than Sharpton went to Bensonhurst lacking a "defining episode." In their collaboration now, Garrow predicted "Walton's 1989 understanding of the concept of 'hoax' ought to stand him in very good stead indeed." And so it has.

I don't find them telling any new big lies here, but they defend old ones and do a lot of dissembling. The book jacket has Sharpton living "in Brooklyn," but he doesn't even live in New York. He writes of his move in 1991 from the city to a garden apartment in Englewood, New Jersey, where he recovered from his stabbing, but twice he implies that he has moved back, which he has not. Similarly, he writes that he never gets involved in a case unless its principals invite him, but that depends on one's definitions of "involve" and "invite," as disgusted Brooklyn tenant leaders and clergymen have told me, and as Mike Kelly, a columnist for the New Jersey *Record* makes amply clear in *Color Lines*, which recounts Sharpton's duplicitous responses to a white cop's slaying of a black Teaneck youth named Phillip Pannell. "I was right about Phillip Pannell," Sharpton now writes. Not according to Kelly's scrupulous account of how and why the officer was acquitted.

Sometimes Sharpton deletes past wrongs entirely: you'd never know from the book that he has ever dealt with the leftish, cultish New Alliance Party, which mixes pseudo-Marxism, black nationalism and psychotherapy, organizing its patients into its leader Lenora Fulani's electoral campaigns, which have garnered public funds that the party has then spent on its own profit-making subsidiaries. For several years, Sharpton operated out of NAP's offices, retained one of its lawyers and rode around in a car rented on its credit card. In return, Fulani traipsed around after him to street demonstrations and "opened" for him on stages, using him for media coverage she couldn't have gotten otherwise. Sharpton himself has used Farrakhan this way, introducing him to 25,000 at New York City's Javits Convention Center in 1993 with the words, "We will stand together. Not in some private midnight meeting ... but in the daylight.... Don't ask who don't like it; we love it! Don't ask who's mad; we're glad!"

Sharpton's best-known controversies prompt his most grandiloquent evasions. Writing about Howard Beach, he rightly claims credit for forcing Mario Cuomo in 1986 to appoint the special prosecutor who superseded a compromised Queens district attorney and won convictions of the white perpetrators of brutal assaults on three black men, one of whom died when he fled into the path of a passing car. But Sharpton complains that "the white media" portrayed him as a meddling opportunist, not a veteran organizer with "a good strategy that worked as planned.... For the first time," he brags, falsely, "whites were going to do serious time for assaulting a black in a bias case in New York City." In 1982, without his help, white toughs got long sentences for murdering a black transit worker leaving a bagel shop in their Brooklyn neighborhood. He writes that his Howard Beach marches brought out the spectators' true racism, but he doesn't mention their fury over a recent string of robberies and brutal break-ins by blacks. Nor does he tell us that Jon Lester, a leader of the white gang, had dated a black girl who defends him even now or that, on an earlier, minor case, Lester had a black attor-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ney whom he'd befriended as a busboy at a diner which the lawyer frequented with local black politicians who called Lester "Elvis" affectionately, on account of his hairdo.

Similarly, Sharpton writes that Dominick Blum, whose car struck and killed the fleeing Michael Griffith, "was found guilty in an administrative hearing of hit-and-run." He doesn't tell us that he and Alton Maddox Jr. and C. Vernon Mason, the attorneys for the two surviving assault victims, vilified Blum as a racist accomplice and demanded his indictment for murder in exchange for their clients' cooperation. They knew that Blum, an innocent passerby returning from a concert that he had attended with a *black* friend, was identified at all only because he had returned to the scene and reported hitting someone. The assaults were an outrage, but our understanding of the climate surrounding them has been impaired by the narratives which Sharpton scripted and the media all but enshrined.

In his chapter on Tawana Brawley, Sharpton again seeks refuge in clever timing. He demands to know how anyone can charge "that I used my media wiles to disseminate a tale that I was not even involved with until a month after it had been made public...." But the point is that he sustained and embellished a tale that he found politically—that is, theatrically—irresistible because it stirred collective black memories of the most intimate sort of violation and of betrayal by the courts. Calling Brawley's charge that she had been abducted and raped by a group of white law-enforcement officers in 1987 "the latest in a series of outrages stretching back to Jamestown," Sharpton can't admit that he summoned the specters of primal, historical violation so vigorously that they overwhelmed the actual evidence in the case. Not only did he thus embarrass and betray blacks' well-founded yearnings for justice; his handling of the case, mirroring his misuse of Dominick Blum in Howard Beach, deepened the injection of racial epistemology into trials. Solicitous liberals were shocked when that "worked" for O.J. Simpson, but, for those who had seen the Brawley controversy as a watershed, Simpson's acquittal was almost anticlimactic.

Sharpton still claims that when grand jurors weighed Brawley's story, they "said only that there was not enough evidence to indict the accused. They did not say that [the case] was a fraud." Actually, they did what the law constrains grand juries to do. His dodging gets even more artful as he frets that the conflicting charges and evidence "cried out for cooperation and community trust.... But it couldn't occur, because the reservoir of goodwill was empty. No one had done any work in building it up." No one, indeed: Sharpton stood with Maddox and Mason as they charged that Attorney General Robert Abrams, who convened the grand jury, had masturbated over photos of Brawley and that her abductors belonged to a white-supremacist cult practicing Irish Republican Army rituals. Sharpton himself told an Associated Press reporter that asking Brawley to cooperate with Abrams on the case was "like asking a Jew who watched his family burn in the Holocaust to cooperate with Hitler."

While Sharpton doesn't acknowledge such assaults on "goodwill," neither does he mention his own quiet withdrawal from the increasingly perfervid Maddox years later. But, then, how could he, when Maddox's diabolically smart lawyering had won his acquittal on sixty-seven counts of grand larceny and fraud brought by a vindictive Abrams in 1989, after the Brawley case was over? Sharpton's fade-out on Maddox, whom he should have repudiated publicly, is typical of how he handles all his apparent commitments, whether to people or principles: he slithers away from them.

Sharpton's accounts of other cases are similarly skewed by old entanglements, unspoken or deftly deflected. Of the Central Park jogger case, he writes, "I didn't dispute the case or the facts, only that some of the accused were clearly uninvolved and that could be proved and I didn't want them railroaded in the fashion of the Scottsboro Boys," black youths who were falsely accused of raping two white women in 1932 and whose case became an international *cause célèbre*. The "wilders" and the Scottsboro boys: the analogy is grotesque and typical. He doesn't mention that he brought Tawana Brawley, whose own tale had already been discredited, to the jogger-trial courtroom to greet the first group of defendants and "to see," as he told the press, "how the criminal justice system responds differently for a white victim than it does for a black victim." In fact, it was he who responded differently—and never mind that two of the defendants whom Brawley greeted had confessed on videotape, one breaking down before a photo of the woman he had bludgeoned.

In 1984, after an FBI sting caught Sharpton talking with Don King and others about a boxing promotion to launder drug-sale profits, he informed for the bureau on mobsters he worked with as a promoter. "We 'flipped' him without having anything really criminal on him, so the con man got conned," a former FBI agent told me. "But soon he was conning the bureau, using us to get closer to King's operations for his own benefit." When I confronted Sharpton with this years later, he retorted, "I think a good reporter would say, 'Wait a minute, if he was runnin' with the mob, what did he *do* for the mob? What deals were cut? Who got killed?' " But if Sharpton had done nothing wrong, why had he informed for

Wissenschaftslehre

In short, there is for me absolutely no such thing
as an existence that has no relation to myself.
—Johann Gottlieb Fichte (Berlin, 1800)

"Himself as everything! How does Mrs. Fichte
put up with it?"—so Heine jokes, yet forgets she
exchanged her sickbed for a deathbed, infecting
Mr. Fichte with the typhus got tending to
her ethics among the poor. And he—of the un-
bending will, son of a ribbon maker, and a
tender of geese—wore out his *Willkomm* among lax
professors, duelling students, and Goethe himself!
Who could blame the Visiting Spirit for smiting
him to the ground, who could only respond, "but you
refer me to myself"? As Napoleon neared
Berlin, the *philosophe* fled, vowing to raise the
avenging spirit of the German *Volk*, for by
then the Science of Knowledge was history. Five
years after his death, they buried Mrs. Fichte,
laying her by his side—dust to dust, all to all.

Paul Kane

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the FBI, which isn't trusted by many blacks? Instead of explaining, he dodges again, suggesting in the book that the then U.S. Attorney Rudolph Giuliani chose the height of the Brawley controversy to leak his old but still-secret bureau history in order to discredit his protests. He raises, then dismisses, the possibility that the leaker was Joseph Spinelli, a former FBI agent who helped to sting and wire him but whom he praises here as "fair and discreet."

The reason for this peekaboo is that Sharpton wants to admit but downplay another strange collaboration, with Mario Cuomo, who was Spinelli's next boss. In 1992, Spinelli, then Cuomo's Inspector General, came with Sharpton to my apartment and vouched for him: "Al's claim that wiseguys never actually did anything illegal around him is potentially true," he said, as Sharpton affected a choirboy's innocence. What prompted this? Could it have been that Cuomo had recently shoehorned Sharpton onto the 1992 Democratic U.S. Senate primary ballot, where he was expected to draw enough black votes from Elizabeth Holtzman and his nemesis Abrams to throw the nomination to Cuomo's unspoken favorite, Geraldine Ferraro? Sharpton mentions that electoral strategy but not the dalliances with Cuomo that attended it.

Of the campaign, he writes that Abrams and Holtzman "never in their worst nightmares thought that old loudmouth Al Sharpton ... would be the one staring back at them in a live debate and standing between them and their dreams." He proved a champion debater, astutely positioned above his three opponents' squabbling over whether Geraldine Ferraro had more mob connections than he did. Sharpton challenged what he calls his opponents' "Democratic Leadership Council/NEW REPUBLIC-type positions" with welfare-statist jeremiads against "Reaganomics"; but he had done more homework than they had on Bosnia and health care, and it showed. Although Abrams won the nomination over Ferraro, Sharpton did come in third, ahead of Holtzman, and Cuomo declared him "the real winner." Abrams began grovelling for Sharpton's support, only to see him and many of his 166,000 primary voters sit on their hands as D'Amato squeaked through. By 1994, it was a running-scared Cuomo who truckled to a Sharpton "rehabilitated" again by local columnists loyal to the governor. Sharpton brags that he carried more than 90 percent of the (very small) black Democratic primary vote against Daniel Patrick Moynihan that year. But what could blacks show for putting so many eggs in his basket that they had come to seem like an exotic appendage to the polity?

And, where, really, are Al Sharpton's pharaohs? Until Giuliani rebuffed him and Moynihan refused to debate him, most New York politicians and journalists had been pushovers for this would-be Moses since 1971, when a lawyer named David Dinkins helped the "wonderboy preacher" incorporate his National Youth Movement. Now he writes that Dinkins's defeat by Giuliani in the 1993 mayoral race "was a Mario Cuomo setup from the beginning," but Sharpton himself was Dinkins's nemesis through most of his mayoralty. The town just wasn't big enough for both of them, and to hear Sharpton tell it back then, Dinkins was a retainer for Pharaoh.

Does Sharpton ever regret his evasions? Well, sort of. "I think that in many ways society is totally a hustle from top to bottom," he told me in 1992, explaining his past collaborations with mobsters and the FBI. "But there are those that aspire to rise above it ... which is why I call that period in my life a weakness." But his weakness for access and publicity, even beneath poses of defiance, has persisted in his dealings with characters as diverse as D'Amato (whom he endorsed outright in 1986) and Moynihan, whom he has courted quietly since losing the primary in 1994 with letters praising his positions on welfare. None of that is in this book, which might better have been called *Go and Hustle Pharaoh.*

Yet the book isn't wholly a hoax. It recounts horrors in Sharpton's childhood home which were real and are the more compelling for the simplicity with which they are rendered. Real, too, is his intimacy, as a virtuoso in the pulpit, with tens of thousands of long-suffering churchgoers, black domestics, nurses and laborers blown North decades ago into dumping grounds of the American Dream. They pay less attention to his media and street antics than to his heart-rolfing homilies, which wouldn't carry well in print and aren't in the book. Also true are Sharpton's claims that he has never been all that comfortable around the Afrocentric and black-nationalist lunacies that he has indulged in the likes of Maddox and Farrakhan. He is not a hater, or a black racist; his political promiscuity is too pressing for that. He would sooner be attacked than ignored, but he wants some whites' approval more than he does their respect.

In 1964, he writes, his father, a successful businessman and landlord, walked out of the family's home in the leafy Hollis section of Queens after impregnating his stepdaughter, young Sharpton's "half-sister." She bore a son—in effect, his brother and nephew. Sharpton told me this in 1992, adding then, as he doesn't in the book, that his half-sister and brother/nephew live in Alabama, the son "in and out of jail, and I identify with him, because he went through some of the same trials I did." What he recalls in the book is that "I had to watch my mother, whom I loved more than anyone, live with the fact that her daughter had stolen her husband, and that the two of them had given life to a child, out of wedlock. To this day I don't know how she lived with the humiliation...." If anything, of course, it was the husband who had stolen his wife's daughter.

As if that weren't puzzling enough, Sharpton invokes his early tragedy again in the chapter on Brawley: "At some point," he writes of the case, "it stopped being Tawana, and started being me defending my mother and all the black women no one would fight for. I was not going to run away from her like my father had run away from my mother, like so many other black men had run away." He means this as a bid for sympathy, but he fails to see that it is a damning admission.

Tawana's own father had indeed left years before. Her step-father, Ralph King—never mentioned in Sharpton's book, though he was in her home throughout the events of the case and the controversy that followed—had murdered his first wife while awaiting trial for having stabbed her fourteen times. Naturally Tawana feared him, and a boyfriend of hers told *Newsday* that she had confided having staged her rape story to keep King from beating her for her four-day disappearance. "Can I say that I know beyond a shadow of a doubt what happened [to Tawana]?" Sharpton asks rhetorically toward the end of the chapter. "No. Neither can my critics. We haven't proved anything definitively, but it hasn't been dismissed."

His most poignant apologia for such nonsense may be a much earlier paragraph about his effort to pull himself together after his own family debacle. Explaining why he hasn't managed to reconcile with his father, he cites a New Testament parable about how sea voyagers coped with a shipwreck:

> Some swam, some floated, some made it on broken pieces. And I always talk about how I'm one of the kids that made it on broken pieces. But when you've learned how to make those broken pieces work, it's kind of hard to rearrange the pattern, because you've made the broken ones do. And maybe, somewhere in your heart, you don't know if there *are* any other pieces, you've held onto the broken pieces so long.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

With more courage and love than many people give him credit for, Sharpton has pieced together a family of thousands and found many surrogate fathers—the Pentecostal bishop who ordained him at age 10, the singer James Brown, Jesse Jackson and others who have taken him under wing and stood with him through his myriad entanglements with the mob, the FBI, the cops, the hecklers, the assailants, the prosecutions, the jail cells, the blunders and big lies.

"[My] vilifiers and critics never tried to look at me as a man and as a person," he writes. "How could they know what I was talking about if they didn't know where I'd been?" How, indeed? But many a reporter who does know where Sharpton has been has hoped that he would rearrange the broken pieces. Learning so little from this memoir, one can only regret that he has abused the trust of so many, deepening black isolation and despair.

JIM SLEEPER is the author of *The Closest of Strangers: Liberalism and the Politics of Race in New York* (W.W. Norton).

Screw Ambiguity

BY JACKSON LEARS

John Wayne: American by Randy Roberts and James S. Olson

(The Free Press, 738 pp., $27.50)

"John Wayne was a fag," announced an acidhead and holy fool in the 1985 film *Repo Man*. "I installed two-way mirrors in his pad in Brentwood, and he came to the door in a dress." This revelation prompts a heated discussion about whether "real men" might engage in voyeurism or other unconventional forms of titillating recreation. It is a memorable absurdist moment: John Wayne, the celluloid icon of strong, silent manhood during the mid-century decades, enters the late-twentieth-century world of anarchic, theatrical sexuality and shape-shifting presentations of self.

Readers will find no such absurdist moments (or startling revelations) in this biography of Wayne. It is a plodding hagiography, burdened by lifeless prose and tedious summaries of every film that the actor ever made—a book as bloated as its subject in his declining years. Yet this sort of criticism misses the book's larger significance. *John Wayne: American* is a Main Selection of the Conservative Book Club; it has been selling (as the authors might say) like hotcakes. Its popularity provokes reflection about conservative political culture, the meanings of heroism, and the enduring mystery of John Wayne's appeal. How could a hardworking but only moderately gifted actor playing predictable, monochromatic roles acquire the status of myth and come to embody "America"?

Anyone puzzled by Wayne's popularity is probably not a member of the Conservative Book Club. He has been an icon on the right for nearly fifty years. Indeed, he played a key role in adapting a right-wing pseudopopulist style to the era of mass media. Pseudopopulism originally parodied the biracial movement for economic democracy that flared up among farmers in the 1890s; the pseudopopulist politician substituted down-home style for democratic substance. At first this was primarily a Southern strategy: since the days of Pitchfork Ben Tillman, the rich and their political friends in the South sought membership in the fraternity of good ol' (white) boys. But John Wayne brought pseudopopulism to a national audience. By the 1950s his own elite credentials were beyond dispute. He fretted about taxes like any other Orange County Republican; he made movies in Mexico to avoid the Hollywood unions and keep labor costs down. Yet he expressed his solidarity with ordinary people by cultivating a plain-folks pose and demonizing a common enemy—Comanches, Japanese, Communists, antiwar protesters, liberal intellectuals. According to Randy Roberts and James S. Olson he became a "working-class hero." Ronald Reagan was waiting in the wings.

If John Wayne was a hero, he was a peculiarly hollow, that is, postmodern kind—a man whose screen persona overshadowed his entire identity. Watching this eerie process unfold in John Wayne's life, one is reminded of Ronald Reagan's confusion: Did he wade ashore at Normandy Beach or was that the movie? Reagan had the excuse of encroaching senility; Wayne, on the other hand, began the self-transformation when he was still in his 20s. Making B-westerns for distribution to small-town audiences in the South and West, he gradually became the character he always played—"a loner" who "may not always know what the law is, but he does know the difference between right and wrong."

World War II complicated the picture. It made Wayne's heroic stance more difficult to sustain in everyday life, but it gave him more opportunities to simulate heroism on screen. Unlike many other rising stars—Henry Fonda, James Stewart, Gene Autry, dozens more—Wayne managed to avoid military service: this icon of masculinity missed the defining male experience of his generation. According to Roberts and Olson, he took advantage of various deferments because he feared "losing the status he had achieved and sinking into obscurity." Yet his acting career during the war and its aftermath solidified his movie-hero's role as the embodiment of the warrior ideal. He spent the entire second half of his life wrapped in the flag, hounding Communists from the country in the 1950s, scolding peace activists and draft resisters for their cowardice in the 1960s and '70s.

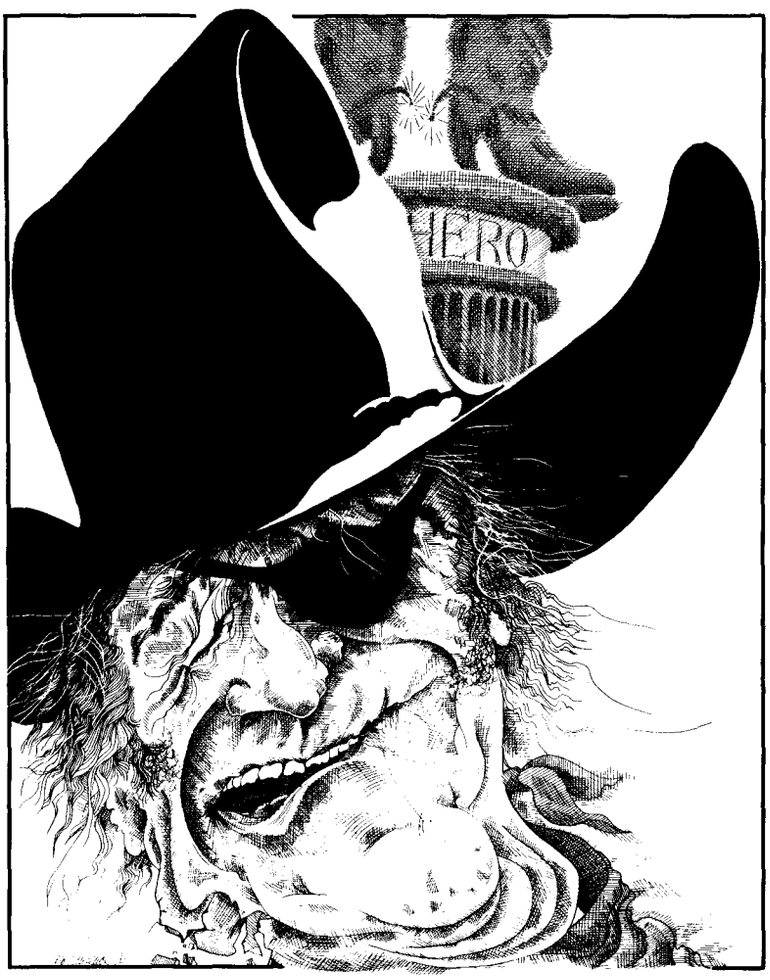
The only way to view this behavior as anything but colossal hypocrisy is to conclude with the authors that Wayne's "screen identity" had somehow "fused with his personality." This is a lame defense and a misleading description of Wayne's psychic life, but it does suggest his cultural significance: what he pretended to be was more important than what he was. Wayne's version of heroism tapped a rich vein of American cultural tradition. D.H. Lawrence made it famous in *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923), when he described Fenimore Cooper's Deerslayer: "A man who keeps his moral integrity hard and intact. An isolate, almost selfless, stoic, enduring man, who lives by death, by killing, but is pure white." This man is cut off from family, community, and faith—that is, the trivial, suffocating world of women. He is faithful only to his own austere warrior's code of honor and vengeance. If you set aside the misogyny and the implicit racism, the stoic isolato preserves a core of appeal: he embodies the romantic and modernist dream of authentic selfhood. He is someone who actually stands for something amid a mush of timidity and moral indifference.

Roberts and Olson take this view. They assume that the only alternative to John Wayne's brand of heroism is no heroism at all—a snickering cynicism bereft of ideals. But the stoic isolato is not the only warrior-hero in the American tradition. There are other figures, less cinematically lustrous but more compatible with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

connections outside the self: the citizen-soldier, for example, whose commitment to fight is rooted in his attachments to particular people and places rather than in abstract notions of manliness, honor or nationhood. John Wayne never played that role, in life or in art.

Nor was he ever completely absorbed by his screen identity, despite his biographers' claims. Through sheer accretion of detail, *John Wayne: American* reveals the complexity of the man, as well as the changing cultural landscape of Hollywood and America from the Great Depression through the Vietnam War. John Wayne inspired friendship and respect among the celebrated and the obscure; he also provoked fear and resentment among the people he bullied for political reasons. He had a penchant for Hispanic wives, but could not live long with them after he married them. He was baffled and threatened by women, beginning with his mother. He was capable of generosity, courage, kindness and loyalty; he was also petty, vindictive and self-righteous. But there was one thing he never really mastered, despite his convincing simulations of it, and that was heroism.



JOHN WAYNE BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

His attachment to a single unchanging cinematic role may have stemmed from his own uncertain sense of who he was. Before he was John Wayne he was Marion Mitchell Morrison, but from his birth in 1907 until he was 5 he was Marion Robert Morrison. His family called him Robert. When he was 5 his mother had another son, and named him Robert, and told her firstborn that from now on he would have a new middle name and be called Marion. In one fell swoop the boy had lost his pride of place, his mother's lap and his name. One can only imagine the effect of this on a young child.

Young Marion grew up in a miserable household. His parents, Clyde Morrison and Molly Brown, had met and married in Des Moines when Clyde was in pharmacy school. Quickly the mismatch became apparent. Molly was ambitious and impatient with the handsome, gentle, ineffectual Clyde. His neighbors agreed that if "Clyde Morrison had four bits left in his pocket, he'd give one quarter to a friend, buy a beer for himself, and sit down and talk." Mary seethed at her husband, a sweet and mellow drunk who could never hold a job long. The Morrisons' life became nomadic, as they bumped from one corner drugstore to another in a series of Iowa towns.

In 1914 they made their most disastrous move, to California, where the hapless Clyde took up wheat farming in the desert with his father's money. The farm failed and they moved to Glendale, where Clyde found another drugstore job. In Glendale "young Marion managed to get rid of his name, which he had always hated"—and which of course had provoked the schoolyard taunt that it was "a girl's name." The family dog, an Airedale named Duke, followed Marion to school every day as far as the local firehouse, where he waited for the boy to return. The firemen began calling Marion "Duke," and he embraced it. At 11, he was free at last of Marion.

Young Duke spent every possible moment out of the house, away from his bickering parents—camping with his Boy Scout troop, playing YMCA basketball, reading Zane Grey novels in the Glendale Public Library, watching Douglas Fairbanks, Tom Mix and Rudolph Valentino in Jensen's Palace Grand Theater, "playing movies" with the neighborhood kids in vacant lots. Duke became a tall, good-looking, athletic California teenager—"the most popular student at Glendale Union High School." He loved to hang out with his father, but he wanted to please his distant, irritable mother. A football scholarship to USC seemed the way up from amiable mediocrity, until he hurt his knee bodysurfing. Movies were the obvious alternative. Duke had glimpsed the fleshly delights of Hollywood at Clara Bow's parties for the USC football team. "He did not like some of the stars' values, but he admired their freedom to behave as they pleased," the authors announce. The bland incongruity of this statement forecasts a fundamental pattern in John Wayne's mature career: he wanted to behave as he pleased while posing as a guardian of "values."

Duke dropped out of college in 1927 and went to work as an assistant prop man for John Ford, the director invariably described as "legendary" in moviespeak. Friendship with Ford gave Duke his start as a B-movie actor, but his first starring role and his screen cognomen came from Ford's rival Raoul Walsh, who transformed Marion Morrison into John Wayne in 1930 for a lumbering epic called *The Big Trail.* Perhaps out of pique, Ford refused to speak to Wayne for more than three years; then one summer day in 1934, when Duke was in a bar on Catalina Island, Ford summoned the actor to his yacht, where he regularly assembled sycophantic drinking buddies for stories, jokes and frat-boy antics. Answering that call was the smartest thing Duke ever did.

He fit right into Ford's circle, and for the next three decades the megalomaniacal director would provide John Wayne with most of his opportunities to rise above hack work. In films such as *Stagecoach* (1939), *Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949) and *The Searchers* (1956), Wayne emerged as a cinematic icon of Lawrence's classic

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

American hero. It was a role that would one day, in more ironic times, be brilliantly parodied by the likes of Pee Wee Herman. ("There's a lotta things about me you wouldn't know anything about, Dottie, things you wouldn't understand, things you couldn't understand, things you shouldn't understand," Pee Wee tells his girlfriend in *Pee Wee's Big Adventure.* "You don't want to get mixed up with a guy like me. I'm a loner, Dottie, a rebel.") During and after World War II, however, Wayne's version of the Deerslayer cast a powerful spell over vast segments of the American movie audience.

This magic melded public aspirations and private longings. The lone gunman embodied popular fantasies about American national identity during World War II and the cold war, but he also focused feelings closer to home—fears of entrapment and yearnings for escape. As the authors observe, Wayne played "the quintessential man of action, one who took matters into his own hands and fought for what he believed in," during a period when people enjoying unprecedented prosperity were paradoxically haunted by personal helplessness. It was a time when men were being urged to define maturity as adjustment to suburban routine, when the team player was replacing the self-made man as the ideal of success in the corporate workplace, when the center of economic life (as David Riesman wrote in *The Lonely Crowd*) had shifted from the invisible hand to the glad hand. Amid the forced bonhomie of the office and the "togetherness" of the household, who could deny the appeal of the strong silent type? Women as well as men were drawn to a character who lived by simple moral axioms but was also an incurable hellraiser. On or off screen, Wayne "never measured a drink or counted how many he had," and his ethical code could be summed up in his pronouncement from the early 1960s: "Screw ambiguity. Perversion and corruption masquerade as ambiguity. I don't trust ambiguity."

The John Wayne hero was the man who is all of a piece, the plain speaker, the transparent self. From the authors' view, it is beside the point to ask whether Wayne's heroic persona was merely a media fabrication. "When the legend becomes a fact, print the legend," says the newspaper editor in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (another Ford-Wayne film). Roberts and Olson embrace this formula, invoking the authority of Ford. "We've had a lot of people who were supposed to be great heroes," Ford told Peter Bogdanovich, "and you know damn well they weren't. But it's good for the country to have heroes to look up to."

This vacant platitude does little to illuminate John Wayne. The case for his heroism remains shrouded in ambiguity, despite his distaste for it. Try as they might, Roberts and Olson cannot dispel a faint aroma of fraudulence about the man. His "naturalness" and "sincerity" were learned poses from the beginning. His patriotism involved an uncanny knack for aligning himself with the most powerful people in American society, always against the pariahs of the moment. The one constant in his life (apart from hard work and heavy drinking) was the effort to maintain the seamless surface of his screen persona. Though the authors claim that Wayne became the hero he played in the movies, Wayne himself felt the painful distance between the movies and real life. For decades he tried to close the gap, but he never fully succeeded.

The ambiguities began with the troublesome ideal of sincerity. Midwestern Protestants (such as Wayne's family) brought it to the film colony in the early years of this century. The normally sturdy plant wilted a bit in the Hollywood climate, in an industry devoted entirely to the calculated orchestration of surface effects. The simulation of sincerity had always been hard to distinguish from the real thing, and in Hollywood the trick became even harder. Nat Levine, Wayne's first B-movie producer, was impressed by "a sincerity, an almost Boy-scout-like sense of decency, that would translate well to the serial format." But from Ford and the actor Harry Carey, Duke had learned "a basic lesson. Appearing natural, like appearing sincere, is artificial." He developed a halting "natural" cadence that "permitted him to maintain an even tempo and present a character that at all times appeared deliberate, thoughtful, and deadly serious, a man who was normally considerate and friendly but dangerous when angered." By studying and perfecting mannerisms, he developed an unchanging persona.

World War II widened the rift between Wayne's screen heroics and his actual behavior. For several years he allowed various deferments to protect him. When he was reclassified 1-A in early 1945, his employer, Republic Pictures, successfully petitioned the government to change his classification to 2-A ("deferred in support of national health, safety, or interest"). Wayne did nothing to challenge this action, despite repeatedly telling Ford he was "ready, anxious and willing to serve." While many of his screen rivals interrupted their careers to enlist, "Duke worked at a frenetic pace, piling up as much money as he could, trying to secure his place in the industry and his financial future."

Some of his wartime movies (*In Old California, The Sea Spoilers*) pilloried "men who traffic in appeasement and legal niceties." Yet it was precisely the "legal niceties" of the draft system that were allowing Wayne to demonstrate his "cocky masculinity" to Marlene Dietrich while many of his contemporaries were being incinerated in foxholes. Often he played the hard, moral military man, in films such as *Flying Tigers.* When he went on USO tours of military hospitals, he told the patients that a football injury had kept him out of the service. Even Wayne's biographers recognize "the irony that without serving a day in the armed forces he was becoming a World War II hero."

After the war he set about trying to minimize the irony. "He would become a 'superpatriot,'" Wayne's third wife, Pilar, wrote in her memoir, "for the rest of his life to atone for staying at home" during the Good War. Wayne brought his private quest for "atonement" into the public arena, at other people's expense. He had "a Midwesterner's suspicion of all true believers," the authors say, but he used it selectively, against the "smug arrogance" of the pinkoes in the Screen Writers' Guild. As president of the Motion Picture Alliance for American Ideals, he did his bit to stoke the fires of countersubversive demonology. He promoted the blacklist, but was less concerned with exposing liberals for their youthful indiscretions than with punishing "men who made films that were critical of American institutions and traditions."

Among those near the top of Wayne's list was Carl Foreman, who refused to name names before the House Un-American Activities Committee. His screenplay for *High Noon* obliquely suggested parallels between HUAC investigators and the slimy gunmen terrorizing the timid townsfolk of the mythical Hadleyville. Wayne called *High Noon* "the most un-American thing I've ever seen in my whole life." He could not tolerate any film that challenged the virtue of the American village; nor could he understand Gary Cooper's nuanced portrayal of the isolated U.S. marshal. Foreman failed to play the repentant role required of leftists; instead he fled to England, anathematized by the Alliance and the Valkyrie Hedda Hopper, who urged in her column that "he never be hired here again." Wayne agreed with this judgment. "I'll never regret having helped run Foreman out of this country," he said.

Wayne's anticommunist stance, Roberts and Olson announce, "put him more in harm's way than ever before." They undermine this bizarre assertion only a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

few pages later: "John Wayne, and the other members of the alliance, were well within the mainstream of American political rhetoric." The plain fact is that Wayne's anticommunism was a virtually risk-free stance, and by 1949—when he assumed the presidency of the MPA—it was a good career move. It was also balm for his troubled psyche. "The Motion Picture Alliance's anti-Communist crusade eased much of his pain about not serving in World War II," Roberts and Olson blithely remark. At least the blacklist was good for somebody. Here as elsewhere in his life, Wayne's heroic pose concealed a strategy of image-maintenance.

The pattern of image-maintenance affected Wayne's private life as well as his public one. "I couldn't be a philanderer," Wayne once claimed. "I tried it—but it made me feel cheap and dirty." The evidence produced here suggests that the man must have felt "cheap and dirty" for years, during all three of his marriages. And yet he "never wanted to play an adulterer," Roberts and Olson report. When his brother, Bobby, and his son, Michael, narrowly survived a car crash after a night of bar-hopping with a couple of women, Duke was relieved, then angry: "His screen persona was nothing if not wholesome, and he hated unseemly rumors about his family." Despite his cash-flow problems he couldn't shill for headache pills because the impression that John Wayne was in pain was an unseemly sign of weakness. He couldn't reveal his late-life affair with his secretary because "he feared being perceived as a dirty old man."

By the 1960s, Wayne began to show the strain of maintaining a heroic persona. His belly was out of control; it was tough to mount a horse gracefully at 260 pounds. His toupée came unglued in the desert sun. And he was diagnosed with lung cancer, which he inevitably personified as female: "the red witch," he called the disease. Like the sunken vessel in *Wake of the Red Witch* (1948), which fatally attracts men to its cargo of gold, his cancer lay "submerged in his system, waiting patiently year after year, but determined to get him." In the end he lost a lung, but beat "the bitch"—until she reappeared in his stomach in 1978.

His physical difficulties were exacerbated by political changes. As early as 1960, Hollywood leftists began to get work again. Duke raged. The end of the blacklist, he felt, was part of a general failure of nerve. "The country's going soft," he complained. Nixon, the hope of the republic, was bested by Kennedy, "a snot-nosed kid who couldn't keep his dick in his pants." After Goldwater's defeat, and Johnson's escalation of the Vietnam War, "the cultural critics continued to rise"—so Roberts and Olson write. Their oddly diffuse description reflects Wayne's own point of view. For him, as for his biographers, the rise of cultural criticism was a kind of mystifying natural phenomenon, a miasma arising from the storm drains of Berkeley and Cambridge, creating noxious clouds of ambiguity.

For Wayne, the issues were simple. He made it his mission to defend the boys in Vietnam by defending American policy. Like others who adopted this logic, he refused to admit that backing the boys' best interests might involve questioning the policy that put them in an impossible situation. Such subtleties were not in Wayne's political repertoire. For him the war was an opportunity to don camouflage fatigues and scoot around Fort Benning, Georgia, in an armored personnel carrier while filming *The Green Berets* (1968)—another chance to show that the slacker had become a superpatriot.

Wayne's visit to Vietnam in 1966 underscored the contrast between the young men at war and the old men who claimed to back them. Wayne would walk up behind a soldier, put his hand on the man's shoulder, and say, "Hello soldier, I'm John Wayne, and I just want you to know a hell of a lot of folks back home appreciate what you're doing." Often, Roberts and Olson report, the soldier would burst into tears. One can hardly presume to know their meaning. No doubt Wayne's intent was humane and many soldiers welcomed it, but the gesture resonates with hollowness. It is an archetypal moment. Old men who cannot face defeat send young men off to slaughter, to preserve fantasies of their own stature. Wayne was not responsible for government policy, but he sanctified this empty ritual of sacrifice.

Wayne's view of the antiwar movement was as simpleminded as his view of the war, but it has become contemporary conventional wisdom: protest against the Vietnam War was merely the self-indulgent whining of gilded youth who (in Wayne's phrase) wanted "to shoot the golden goose." This breathtaking non sequitur could be dismissed as ludicrous confusion if it were not so widespread. With numbing regularity, breast-beating baby-boomers now publicly lament the "selfishness" of their "generation"—a shortcoming supposedly most evident in their resistance to the Vietnam War. Apart from the difficulty involved in assigning particular vices (or virtues) to whole generations, this *mea culpa* reduces a complex social movement to a series of personal moral failures. *John Wayne: American* contributes to this muddle.

Let us try to be clear on this matter, for once. Antiwar protesters articulated serious criticism of a government policy that no one could defend convincingly, and that was destroying thousands of innocent lives; and most felt deeply sympathetic toward the young men who were being vacuumed up by the Selective Service machine. Many were college students who fit the beads-and-sandals stereotype, but many others were ordinary people from a variety of class and cultural backgrounds—elderly Quakers, young Rastafarians, business executives, union organizers, priests and nuns, ministers and rabbis, mothers and fathers who had lost sons. This was a multiracial, multi-class movement of people who had come to the common conclusion that the war was an appalling mistake.

Most important: many in the antiwar movement were veterans themselves. Antiwar veterans were often from the working-class "backbone of America" that Wayne claimed to admire—men and women who had felt it was their patriotic duty to enlist, who had seen the futility and mendacity of American policy at close range, and who concluded it was also their patriotic duty to protest, often at the risk of going to jail or ending their careers. Their kind of heroism embodied a genuine alternative to the version represented by the silent, stoic killer. When we think about the movement to end the Vietnam War, we have to get beyond the John Wayne perspective. We have to remember those citizen-soldiers, gathered on the steps of the U.S. Capitol, turning in their combat medals when they could no longer take pride in wearing them. They were patriots, too.

But there is no space in *John Wayne: American* for the varieties of patriotism. The book's two-lane tunnel vision of recent American history is as narrow as John Wayne's own. A wider view might have considered the place of Wayne in conservative political culture. He personified a pastiche: rugged individualist mythology, masculine assertiveness and anxiety, all preserved in half-remembered scenes from old movies—a common sensibility on the right (as elsewhere), and a pretty flimsy basis for a defense of political or ethical tradition. Wayne's life epitomized the contradictions at the heart of contemporary conservative thought, that looking-glass realm where a man who avoided the most justifiable war of the century can become an ersatz military hero and scolding superpatriot. He was a big guy with a lot of charm and a strong presence. But when it came to heroism, John Wayne was a fraud.

JACKSON LEARS is the author of *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (Basic Books).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MOROCCO DIARIST

Hide and souk

LIKE MANY AMERICANS ON THEIR way to Morocco, I was counting on the writing of Paul Bowles as my literary prologue. But just as my wife began reading one of his novels my eyes fixed on the spine of a book I didn't realize we had. Written by Tahar Ben Jelloun, a Moroccan now living in Paris, *Corruption* (New Press) had won the *prix littéraire du Maghreb* when, in 1994, it was published in French—as *L'Homme Rompu*, a double entendre that is more precisely evocative of the Kafkaesque predicament faced by its protagonist. Mourad lives by the rules. But he is almost alone in doing so. Ben Jalloun shows how fragile the norms of bureaucratic rationality are as they meet traditional societies that want modernity the easy (and undeserved) way. Yet this is not simply a sociological novel about the kleptocratic Third World. It is about temptation and how it ensnares a good man: "Whoever said that night is a good adviser?" It is night when Mourad finds that "dirty money gives you wings," when he persuades himself that "bonuses" are a redistributive tax on the rich. The good in him struggles against these insights. In the end, however, his "voice remains a prisoner at the bottom of my throat." He knows that he has "remained small. And the small are crushed."

WE ARE TOURING OLD CITIES WITH older *medinas*: Fez, Meknes, Marrakesh, Essaouira, Taroudant. So we've had little opportunity to meet and judge the modernizing bureaucrat. These antique locales are as different from each other as Boston is from Dallas. Of course, they are each of them dense cities, and Fez far denser (and more haunting) than Marrakesh. In the *souk* of one, women seem shadowy, almost absent; in another teenage boys and girls cavort together freely. The hustler and the hassler will pursue the visitor in Meknes endlessly, while the shopkeeper in Taroudant will barely pay you attention. There are perhaps more important visual distinctions, and they remind me of Fouad Ajami's caution that there is nothing self-evident behind the shrouding veil and the forbidding door. Don't assume anything: a hovel entrance may lead you to unimagined magnificence or to garbage. Knowing from past experience, however, that seacoast towns are the loosest, I was unsurprised by the late hours of Essaouira and by its lively, almost Italian, café life. But this was the venue where the veil seemed to be very much in fashion. The veiled here do not walk with that coquettish jaunt of Cairene women in black. But they clearly do not don protective gear to keep men away or because of general principles of modesty: a voice from one hidden face asked if we'd like to snap her photograph. For *dirhams*—money—of course.

FROM MATISSE, WE KNOW THAT the color of Morocco is blue. There are blue doors, robes, taxis, ceramic plates, even a failed revolutionary called the "Blue Sultan." But Morocco is not only blue. The "orientalist" painters were absolutely accurate. It is the culture most dazzlingly various in color I know, even in the areas of built-yesterday prosperity. A row of veiled women, seated always with their backs to the sun, is a parade of fuchsia, green, orange, pink, yellow, red, and all the hues thereof—mirroring the carpets, the architecture, the mosaics, the jewelry, mirrors mirroring mirrors, just as the painters painted, the rich colors of the poor.

YOU CAN STILL SEE, THROUGH A lazy meandering of the eye, the romantic images that stirred Delacroix. Of course, there are no fiery-nostrilled steeds prancing on the horizon. And there are virtually no Jews. So there are virtually no Jewish weddings to paint. Moroccan Jewry goes back to the early Middle Ages, and its tradition of learning was ringingly established as early as the eleventh century by the great Rabbi Isaac Alfasi, who wrote an authoritative talmudic commentary before Rashi. Forty years ago there were roughly half a million Jews here, some poor and primitive, some rich and very influential. Then, within a few short years, they all decamped, half to Israel and the rest to wherever. But they did not exactly flee Morocco. They fled pan-Arabism, which overwhelmed almost all its neighbors, poisoning Muslim against Jew and bringing, in the wake of its own implosion, an eruption of Islamic fanaticism and the hostility of Muslim against Muslim, which in North Africa only Morocco has eluded. But, with the Jewish community now long gone, only its haunted places remain and a few synagogues for the very few who stayed. In two of these there hung from the walls the theologically smug visage of the departed cult leader from Eastern Parkway, the Lubavitcher *rebbe*, not the last and not the first of the Jewish false messiahs.

ACTUALLY, IT IS THE MONARCH who is responsible for the balance between the traditional and the new that keeps religious extremism at bay. This week he asked Moroccans to abjure the lamb sacrifice of Aid al-Adha. The muezzin (a real one, not a recording) begins everyone's day around 4:30 a.m., and he returns over the rooftops four times more. Nonetheless, by law and custom, it is a latitudinarian Islam that prevails. Police are visible in almost every village, perhaps to swell the ranks of the employed. But then the police are on real-work watch at Checkpoint Charlies all over the country against the international drug traffic—which is more than you can say about the police of Warren Christopher's friend Hafez al-Assad who are on its take. I don't doubt that Human Rights Watch carries some cosmic grievance against King Hassan II. He is, after all, not Mike Dukakis. Still, his government rules sternly, not brutally. There is an opposition press and a national intelligentsia sympathetic to the opposition. Not exactly a full democracy, you might say. But that's not a choice here. An independent-minded friend summed up Hassan's true virtue: "Without him, we'd be either Libya or the Sudan—or Algeria, a combination of both."

THIS IS A TRILINGUAL SOCIETY. Everybody speaks Arabic, almost everybody speaks (some) French, and a huge minority speaks Berber. Until modern linguists did their work, the Berbers had no written language. They are a just-barely mollified ethnic group, and some fear that in their latent resentments lie the future strains of Morocco (their situation has already exacerbated Algeria's turmoils). The survival of French in Morocco is a triumph of the idea of France. The elites speak it at home and among themselves. Every sign has it. It is the language of all good schools, and of the universities, as in the rest of Francophone Africa. Yet it is more remarkable here in that it was chosen not over some oral patois but over the grandiloquent language of an historic civilization. The language may be French, but the iconography of the young is American. The t-shirt totems are the Chicago Bulls, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Madonna, Sylvester Stallone and Whitney Houston. I wondered what the Keith Haring shirt meant to the book-toting young man who wore it.

MARTIN PERETZ

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Moving Right Along

Last month's national education summit has been dismissed by some as "just talk" and public relations. I think that view is a big mistake. The summit, sponsored by the National Governors' Association and IBM's Louis Gerstner, took steps which, over time, will lead to a vast improvement in school achievement.

The summit is the latest in a number of events leading to change. The first was the publication of "A Nation At Risk" in 1983. Ridiculed and dismissed by most educators, it woke up the nation. It led to fewer Mickey Mouse courses, more academic course work, and higher entry standards for teachers. Most important, it led to the education summit of 1989.

The first summit was convened by President Bush. He, together with the nation's governors, led by then-governor Bill Clinton, expressed dissatisfaction with the speed of reform. To hasten reform, and define it more specifically, the president and the governors unanimously put forward the national education goals. The goals made more specific where we needed to go and when we were aiming to get there.

To help achieve the goals, President Bush proposed legislation called America 2000, which was not passed because it contained a controversial school voucher proposal. President Clinton reintroduced the legislation, with modifications, as Goals 2000, and it passed with an overwhelming bipartisan vote early in 1994. For the first time, the Congress adopted national education goals and provided seed money for states to develop standards and assessments in each academic discipline. Almost all of the states participated.

The 1994 elections brought a new Congress in—one that did not want the federal government to play any role in developing education standards. Many governors were elected at the same time, and they wondered whether they should continue with the process.

Last month's summit answered that question with a resounding *yes*, even though only six governors were there who had been present in 1989. The states would take the responsibility for developing world-class standards and assessments designed to measure whether the standards were being met. Those governors who had doubts or were under pressure to reject standards were immensely aided. It was clear that all the states were going to do this. If one or two decided not to, they would be depriving their students of educational opportunities—and, as 50 business leaders pointed out, their states of economic opportunities. The governors will also try to establish a voluntary, nongovernmental clearinghouse where each state can find out how its standards compare with those of other states and other countries. While each state will develop its own standards, there is implicit agreement that there's no reason why a student in Kentucky should not learn the same math as students in California.

There was another breakthrough. The resolution adopted by the summit participants called for corporations to ask for high school transcripts and take student school performance into account in employment decisions. This will be a big step in providing incentives for students to work hard to meet the school standards. (Colleges and universities take notice.)

Some educators were worried because Louis Gerstner of IBM rather than the president of the United States convened the summit. Would education be narrowed for vocational interests? Gerstner laid that fear to rest when he repeatedly stated on TV and at the summit, "We're not interested in having schools train students in how to use machine tools or spreadsheets. What is killing us is having to teach students how to read, compute, communicate and think."

Now the question is whether the states will move ahead effectively. They will face a number of tough decisions:

State standards or local standards? Some are pushing for local. But that's what we have now; that's what brought us to this mess. Though localities are good at many things, they do not have the capacity to develop standards and assessments. As a result, instead of local standards, we actually have national standards determined by the textbooks we buy. These are low level and unfocused because textbooks were not designed to be standards. Also, local standards imply that the math a student should know should be different depending on which school district the student lived in. Is that what we want?

Voluntary or mandatory? Some governors played with the idea that the state standards would be voluntary and the local districts would comply anyway. Before we go along with that, let's try an experiment. Make compliance with traffic signals voluntary and see if drivers and pedestrians comply anyway.

General or specific standards? Most standards tell us what students are expected to know by the time they are 17 or 18. That's not good enough. Unless we have standards that tell us, grade by grade, what the teacher is required to teach and the student required to learn, many of our students will not reach the level of competence that we expect of high school graduates.

It would be wrong to imply that the governors and business leaders have reached a state of unanimity about U.S. education and what it needs. But the summit revealed that they are united about one basic point: Higher standards are the foundation for improving the achievement of all our students, and they must come first. Other reforms may work, but we will never know unless we have standards and assessments by which to measure their success.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1996 by Albert Shanker.

ADVERTISEMENT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

APPHIRE MARTINI. AS BY STEPHEN DWECK.

U R S O M E T H I N P R I C E L E S S.

Bombay® Sapphire™ Gin. 47% alc/vol (94 Proof). 100% grain ne Importers, LTD., Teaneck, N.J. ©1994 Stephen Dweck.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED